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ENGLISH HISTORY IN SHAKSPEARE

By

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Fellow of Worcester College,

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B1882

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"Mother, mother beloved, none other could claim in place of thee
England's place;
Earth bears none that beholds the sun so pure of record, so clothed
with grace:
Dear own mother, nor son nor brother is thine, as strong or as fair of
face,
How shalt thou be abased? or how shall fear take hold of thy heart?
of thine,
England, maiden immortal, laden with charge of life and with hopes
divine?
Earth shall wither, when eyes turned hither behold not light in her
darkness shine."

LONDON

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1918

In Memoriam Dilectissimam

J. D. M.

Qui

" Ingenui vultus puer ingenuique pudoris,"

In agro Belgico Alemannos Oppugnans

Mortem Dulcem et Decoram

Pro Patria

Obiit

Die xxvi Sept.

A.S.

MDCCCCXVII.

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PREFACE

THE publication of a book upon Shakspeare by a mere historian, even though his text be the English Chronicle Plays, demands something more than a perfunctory apology. A lover of Shakspeare from boyhood, I cannot claim to be in the professional sense a student of English dramatic literature. So far as they deal, therefore, with the literary or dramatic aspects of the Chronicle Plays these chapters are the work of an amateur, and must be read as such. But, as my title implies, the point from which I have approached the study of these plays is a different one. I have approached it as a student of History and Politics. The lectures upon which the book is based were originally drafted many years ago, but, as now published, the book has been entirely rewritten. I have been moved to publish it by considerations upon which I enlarge in the introductory chapter. The English Historical Plays have, I am convinced, for England and for the English-speaking world, a political message, the significance of which cannot, at this moment in our history, be over-emphasized.

I claim for this little book no originality save that of "angle." For the rest, my obligations to previous writers are, like Falstaff's lies, so gross and palpable, that I take refuge in a general acknowledgment here and a list of "Authorities" elsewhere. The scope of the work would forbid systematic references even if I were invariably conscious of my debts; and promiscuous reading spread over a long

period of time, renders it highly probable that my obligations are greater than I know. But the references and the list of authorities will, at least, indicate some of them, and for any that are not acknowledged I crave pardon. My friend Sir Walter Raleigh has been kind enough to read a considerable portion of the proofs, and I am grateful to him for doing so; but he is in no way responsible either for substance or form. In both respects, the book leaves much to be desired; my only excuse is that it has had to be completed and prepared for press amid distractions, which are not favourable to literary composition, yet to delay publication further would frustrate one of the objects I have in view. I ought to add that more than a third of the book has appeared in the pages of the *Fortnightly Review*, and I must express my obligations to the Proprietors and Editor of that *Review* for permission to reprint.

J. A. R. MARRIOTT.

OXFORD,
November 5th, 1917.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY. THE SPIRIT OF ENGLAND AS REVEALED IN THE CHRONICLE PLAYS

"The Historical Plays have identified Shakspeare with English feelings in English hearts."

HENRY HALLAM.

"The stream of Time, which is continually washing the dissoluble fabrics of other poets, passes without injury by the adamant of Shakspeare."

DR. JOHNSON.

"Dramatic poetry is like History made visible, and is an image of past actions as if they were present."

BACON.

THIS should have been "Shakspeare's year," and who can doubt that but for the supreme pre-occupation of the Great War it would have been dedicated to his memory. Three hundred years ago Shakspeare laid aside all that was in him of mortality, and the world, if it had not been engaged in a titanic struggle, would surely have seized the opportunity afforded by the tercentenary for paying elaborate homage to the greatest name in all literature. As it is, noble tributes to his memory have not been wanting; nor have they been confined to England or to English-speaking folk; they have been rendered in every quarter of the civilized world, where supreme genius commands

admiration and respect. And it is just and fitting that the tribute should be world-wide, for Shakspeare's appeal is not to this nation, or to that, but to humanity at large. He, if any man, was a citizen of the world. Nevertheless, though he wrote not for Englishmen only but for mankind, not for an age but for all time, yet it is true of him as of all the greatest sons of men that he was essentially native born, the son of his own country, the product of his own day; and that, despite his catholic sympathies and his wide outlook upon life, he was also intensely national, pre-eminently an Elizabethan Englishman, above and before all else a great-hearted English patriot.

The product of his own age; a child of the English renaissance; fulfilled with the spirit of Tudor England. To say that he was happy in his day is not enough. It is the literal truth that born in any other age he would not have been the Shakspeare that we know. Had he lived a century earlier the Comedies could not—even assuming the existence of a Theatre and a dramatic tradition—have been conceived amid the gloom and distractions of the Wars of the Roses; still less could we have had the great drama of English history, as it is unfolded in the Chronicle Plays.

It is with the last that this book will be exclusively concerned. For the moment seems peculiarly appropriate for an attempt to reinforce the lesson which it was the purpose of the Chronicle Plays to teach. All those plays, with the exception of *Henry VIII*, which belongs to a much later date (1612), were written within the fifteen years which elapsed between the defeat of the Spanish Armada and the

close of the Elizabethan era. And they are all redolent of the spirit of the time; fulfilled with the heroic temper of Elizabethan England, an England which under the strong rule of the Tudor Sovereigns and in the warm glow of the Renaissance had been, in literal truth, reborn. The Armada fight marked the zenith of that great period in English history. Just a century had then elapsed since the battle of Bosworth had brought to an end a period of unrest and civil strife; of lack of governance at home; and abroad of military disaster and national humiliation. The Tudors had given England discipline, repose and strong government at a moment when they were sorely needed. Under their rule the English people and the English mind had marvellously expanded, and that not in one sphere only but in a hundred diverse directions. The Renaissance had brought to them not merely a new knowledge of the treasures of the ancient world, but a new spirit of scientific investigation, and a fresh-born zeal for geographical and commercial enterprise. As Copernicus had revealed to men a new heaven, so Columbus, Vasco da Gama and the Cabots had opened out a new earth.

Owing partly to political distractions, partly to her remote geographical position, partly to other causes, England was tardy in awakening to the significance of the new spirit with which the Renaissance had suffused the heart and mind of man. But the awakening came at last in the sixteenth century, and thereafter England's development was extraordinarily rapid. And not only rapid but many-sided. Colet, Erasmus and More brought to Oxford the

spirit of the new learning, new methods of exigesis, a new zeal for research; and from Oxford it diffused itself throughout the land; old schools which had fallen into decay were refounded; new schools were established; new ideas applied to agriculture produced changes which amounted to nothing less than a revolution; the agrarian revolution had a wide reaction, social and economic; an immense impulse was given both to domestic industries and to foreign trade; wealth was rapidly accumulated; the value of money fell; the standard of living rose. But of all the many manifestations of the new spirit that which was most characteristic of England was the fresh-born love of maritime adventure and geographical discovery. Davis and Frobisher, Hawkins and Drake, Sir Richard Grenville, Sir Humphrey Gilbert and Sir Walter Raleigh—these are the names which give its special significance to the Elizabethan era, and embody most truly the new ideals of the English people of those breezy days. Hakluyt's collection of *Voyager's Tales* has been described, and justly, as the prose epic of Elizabethan England. But the quintessence of the Elizabethan temper will be found, strongest and best, in the Chronicle Plays of Shakspeare.

Three hundred years have passed since those plays were produced. Since the Armada crisis of 1588 we have had in our national history no such tense moment as the present. The circumstances of the two epochs, divided by this long interval of time, are indeed curiously parallel. As a period of rapid development, social, political and economic, the nineteenth century was certainly not inferior to the sixteenth; it

was hardly inferior in respect of intellectual emancipation, of educational activity or of geographical expansion; as an epoch in the history of domestic industry, of scientific research, of over-sea enterprise the age of Victoria does not yield pride of place even to the age of Elizabeth.

Nor does the parallel end here. A period of unprecedented national prosperity has been followed, in the one case as in the other, by the oncoming of an acute crisis in the external relations of the country. The unification of the Spanish Kingdom and its rapid development and expansion has found a parallel in the unification and development of the German Empire. It was the Spanish Habsburgs in the earlier period, it was the Hohenzollern in the later, who threatened the equilibrium of Europe and jeopardised the independence of the smaller States. In the one case as in the other, England flew to the rescue of Europe. But there is a further and sinister correspondence. In neither case was the crisis wholly external. Never has the enemy at the gate had any terror for England, provided her ruler could speak as the representative of a united people. National unity was to Shakspeare the one supreme condition of national greatness. That unity had been threatened in the fifteenth century by the shameful weakness of the central Government; by the dynastic strife between Lancaster and York. It was threatened in the sixteenth century by the changes, social, economic and ecclesiastical, and the resulting divisions between creed and creed, between class and class. "All battle," said Carlyle, writing of Chartism, "is misunderstanding." There was misunderstanding in

the sixteenth century; but there was something more. There was a real, if temporary, conflict of economic interests between social classes; there was a real conflict between the political interests of the Commonwealth and the economic interests of individual citizens. It is hardly open to doubt that the agrarian revolution, the consolidation of holdings, the development of grazing farms, the substitution of pasturage for tillage,—in a word, "enclosures"—was not merely a prelude to, but one of the main causes of, the marvellous expansion of national prosperity under the Tudor Sovereigns. It is still less open to question that these changes involved serious loss to individuals, and to not a few brought acute suffering and actual ruin.

Contemporaries are not, as a rule, the best judges of the ultimate significance of the economic changes which they observe and record. They cannot estimate general results; but they can measure the effect upon individuals; and the popular literature of the sixteenth century, apart from the evidence of social insurrections like that headed by Robert Kett, leaves us in no doubt as to the prevailing temper of the time. It is only too clear that there was bitter antagonism between class and class:

"Envy waxeth wonders strong,
The rich doth the poore wrong,
God of His mercy suffereth long
The devil his workes to worke,
The towns go down, the land decayes,
Off cornfyldes, playne layes (grass lands)
Gret men make the now-a-dayes
A shepecott in the church."

So sang an anonymous balladist. The sermons of Bishop Scory and Bishop Latimer; the *Utopia* of Sir Thomas More; the folk-songs and popular dialogues of the day, all tell a similar tale. And their testimony is corroborated by the benevolent, but generally futile, efforts of the legislature to arrest the economic tendencies and to mitigate the sufferings of individuals.

Apart from economic changes there were other disintegrating forces at work, notably ecclesiastical differences. The politic moderation of the Elizabethan Settlement, though acceptable to neither of the more zealous parties, went some way to appease religious strife, and as the reign went on the social life of the nation began to adjust itself to the new economic conditions, while the paternal socialism of the *Statute of Apprentices* and the new Poor Law at least afforded evidence that the State was not careless of the well-being of its citizens.

But the chief incentive to national unity was the external menace to national independence. "The fear of external dangers" wrote Richard Hooker, "causeth forces at home to be more united; it is to all sorts a kind of bridle, it maketh virtuous minds watchful, it holdeth contrary dispositions in suspense, and it setteth those wits to work on better things which would otherwise be employed in worse." How real and grave was the danger the history of the first thirty years of Queen Elizabeth's reign is on record to prove. But by 1588 the victory was won. Thanks to a ruler of incomparable prudence and skill; thanks to ministers of rare wisdom and devotion; thanks, above all, to the people at large

who became each day more united in the common cause, the danger passed. But who could tell whether it might not recur? No one who had lived through the critical days could be blind to the possibility. Internal divisions, if renewed, would be certain to invite external interference. National unity; an end to dynastic strife; a truce between parties; harmony between classes; this was the supreme need of the hour; this was the lesson which the Chronicle Plays of Shakspeare were intended pre-eminently to enforce.

Can it be deemed impertinent to recall that lesson to-day? Is it superfluous to suggest a renewed study of that wonderful series of historical dramas which, in the words of the historian Hallam, "have identified Shakspeare with English feeling in English hearts."

To all time this year, 1916, will, we trust, be memorable as marking the turn of the tide in the most critical struggle through which this country has passed since the dispersion of the great Armada of Spain.

The study of the Chronicle Plays may well serve to steel our hearts to the efforts and sacrifices which are still undoubtedly ahead of us in the war, and to attune our minds to an earnest consideration of the domestic problems which will await solution on the return of peace.

Such, impertinent or not, is the purpose of the pages that follow.

The method of study is plainly dictated by the purpose which we have in view. That being so, a

preliminary question may be quickly disposed of: shall we study these dramas in the order of their composition, or in their historical sequence? The divergence between the two orders is considerable. "The most fruitful order of studying the works of Shakspeare," writes a distinguished commentator, "is that which views them in the chronological order of their production." It may be so; but it would seem to depend upon the primary purpose which inspires the study. If we wish, as in one of his delightful books* Mr. Edward Dowden wished, to trace the gradual development of Shakspeare's powers, to mark the stages in the evolution of his art, we should naturally study the plays in the order, so far as it can be ascertained, of their composition; we should begin with the three Parts of *Henry VI*, passing on to *Richard III*, *King John*, and *Richard II* (the order of these two is hotly debated) the two parts of *Henry IV*, *Henry V*, and—*longo intervallo*—*Henry VIII*.

But the adoption of this method, fruitful as it is from certain stand-points, would defeat the purpose which I have essentially in view. Eight out of the ten plays founded upon English history are linked together in the closest historical sequence. The series which begins with *Richard II* and ends with *Richard III* forms in effect a single drama; a "ring," as Wagner would have termed it. *King John* may be regarded as a prologue to the central series, somewhat detached from it in point of time, but logically and ethically connected with it; *Henry VIII* forms an obvious and appropriate epilogue.

* "Shakspeare's Mind and Art."

Desiring, as I do, to treat the Chronicle Plays as a contribution to the History of England; to draw from them, if it may be, a political moral, it is obvious that they must be studied not in their bibliographical, but in their historical, sequence. And for this procedure we have the sanction of so good a scholar as Mr. Charles Knight. "We may consider this series of plays," he wrote, "as the development of a great idea of dramatic unity, conceived it may be by the poet in his earliest period, although produced in detached portions and not grouped into one story until *Henry VIII* completed the series." We shall then, begin the more detailed study of the plays with *King John*.

Meanwhile, by way of preface, an attempt must be made to estimate the general significance of Shakspeare's commentary upon an important period of English history, and to discover the moral which he is careful to point.

As a dramatic chronicler Shakspeare had, however, no monopoly among his contemporaries. Incomparably the greatest among them, he was by no means alone. Quite the contrary. The English Chronicle Play reached in Shakspeare's day its final literary form and attained the zenith of its vogue and popularity. It had slowly and painfully evolved from various sources: from the "Moralities" of an older day; from popular folk lore, and most directly from the "Pageants" or "Ridings" like the "Hock Tuesday Play of Coventry," the "Lutterworth Christmas Play," and the "Oxfordshire St. George Play." It reached its maturity in the latter years of the sixteenth century; a time, as we have seen, of intense

patriotic national emotion, of unbounded enthusiasm. Between 1586 and 1606 no fewer than one hundred and fifty of such plays were actually performed; more than half of them in the last decade of the century.* This rank abundance was important to Shakspeare in two ways: on the one hand, it provided material out of which he could fashion his own plays, as in the case of *King John*; on the other, it enabled him to assume, on the part of his audience, an intimate knowledge of events to which his own play made no reference. In *Richard II*, for example, it is clear that Shakspeare presupposes a familiarity with an earlier play, of which Thomas of Woodstock, Duke of Gloucester, was the central figure, and which dealt with the earlier period of Richard's reign.

Of the plays actually utilized by Shakspeare something must be said in subsequent chapters. On other "sources" a word may be interposed now. The term "sources" is perhaps misleading. It suggests modern methods of investigation. But Shakspeare, it need hardly be said, was not a scientific historian, but a playwright. To historical research he made no pretence; all that he wanted was a story capable of dramatic treatment, and he took it from the first available source. Sometimes he went no further than an existing play on the same subject; and never perhaps was his unfailing dramatic instinct, his perfect literary tact, more admirably and wonderfully exemplified than in the skill with which these adaptations were made. In *King John*, for example, there is no evidence even of an independent

* Schelling: "The English Chronicle Play," p. 2.

reading of Holinshed's *Chronicles*. All that Shakspeare wanted he found in a play which had been published only four or five years before his own, entitled, *The Troublesome Raigne of John, King of England*. Similarly, though by no means to the same extent, *Henry the Fourth* is founded upon an earlier play, *The Famous Victories of Henry the Fifth*. Apart from existing plays, Shakspeare relied for his historical facts mainly upon the *Chronicles* of Raphael Holinshed. The work of which Holinshed was the author, or more strictly speaking the editor, comprised a history of Ireland down to 1547, of Scotland down to 1571, and of England down to 1575. Holinshed was assisted in its compilation by Harrison, Stow, and other scholars of the day, but for the history of the fifteenth century he relied mainly upon the work of Edward Hall. Hall lived under the first two Tudors, and died in 1547. Educated at Eton and King's College, Cambridge, where he took his B.A. degree in 1518, he was appointed Common Serjeant in 1532; he represented Bridgnorth, for a time, in the House of Commons, and served on the Commission appointed to enquire into the transgression of the Six Articles. In 1542 he published the Chronicle which, though prohibited by Queen Mary, was largely utilized by Shakspeare in the following reign. The full title of Hall's work aptly summarizes the argument of Shakspeare's Chronicle Plays. It runs thus: *The union of the two Noble & Illustre Families of Lancaster and York being long in continual dissension for the crown of this noble realm with all the actes done in both the times of the prince, both of the one lineage and of the other,*

beginning at the time of King Henry the Fourth, the first author of this division, and so successively proceeding to the reign of the high and prudent Prince King Henry the Eighth, the undubitate flower and very heir of both the said lineages. Hall's Chronicle starts with the year 1398 and closes in 1485. Shakspeare's central series of historical plays begins and ends at the same points. In *Henry the Eighth* Shakspeare and his collaborator relied mainly upon Holinshed, but they got various hints from an earlier play on the subject of Cardinal Wolsey, and they consulted also Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* and Edmund Campion's *History of Ireland.* If it be the case, as seems possible, that Shakspeare also utilized a manuscript copy of Cavendish's *Life of Wolsey* (which was not printed until twenty-five years after Shakspeare's death), it would not seem fantastic to suggest that similar materials may have come into his hands for other plays.* But there is no direct evidence of the fact.

In the main he relied, apart from existing plays upon the published chronicles of Hall and Holinshed, the standard historians of his day.

To these chroniclers, as to Shakspeare, " history " consisted primarily in the play of personal forces; it is a record of the deeds good and bad of eminent individuals: of Kings and Queens; of great soldiers and statesmen; of proud nobles, and high ecclesiastics; it takes account of wars and battles, of political intrigue, of treason, of insurrection. In short, it is what John Richard Green derided as " drum and trumpet history." It is pre-eminently a recital of concrete

* Cf. Malden: Transactions of Royal Historical Society (New Series). Vol. x, p. 31.

facts ; a discussion of individual motives ; a tale of love and hate ; of success and failure ; of vaulting ambition and precipitous ruin ; of loyal friendship and bitter rivalry.

The text upon which Shakspeare preaches may be found in the opening sentence of Hall's Chronicle :

" What mischief hath insurged in realms by intestine division, what depopulation hath ensued in countries by civil dissension, what detestable murder hath been committed in cities by separate factions, and what calamity hath ensued in famous regions by domestic discord and unnatural controversy : Rome hath felt, Italy can testify, France can bear witness, Beaume can tell, Scotland may write, Denmark can show, and especially this noble realm of England can apparently declare and make demonstration."

This is a complete summary of the argument of the Chronicle Plays.

The modern historian approaches the study of the same period from a different angle. He cannot, of course, ignore the play of personal forces : the influence of great men upon the events of their time ; the great part that war has played in shaping the destinies of nations ; the significance of the prolonged struggle between the Kings of England, who were lords also of large parts of France, and their feudal suzerain the King who reigned in Paris ; the reaction of that struggle upon English history ; its effect more particularly upon the relations of England and Scotland :

" He who would France win,
Must with Scotland first begin."

He must follow, too, the course of the civil dissensions of the fifteenth century, the wars between the White Rose and the Red. But to the modern commentator, more particularly if he has graduated in the school of Comte, these things do not constitute the pre-eminent or more permanent interest of the period under review. Each period is regarded by him as a stage in the unending process of evolution. His philosophy of history (to use a dangerous phrase) is synthetic as well as analytic. In the myriad phenomena of human society he seeks the operation of law and tries to discover in distracting multiplicity of details the essential unities which underlie them. "All epochs," as the great Turgot said, "are fastened together by a sequence of causes and effects linking the present condition of the world to all the conditions that have gone before it. The human race observed from its beginning seems in the eye of the philosopher to be one vast whole; which, like each individual in it, has its infancy and growth. No great change comes without having its causes in preceding centuries; and it is the true object of history to observe in connection with each epoch those secret dispositions of events which prepare the way for great changes, as well as the momentous conjunctions which more especially bring them to pass." Thus the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth represent, primarily, well marked stages in the development of a parliamentary constitution; the transition from mediæval feudalism to modern economic relations based upon "free" labour and "free" contract; the rise of the universities, and a new temper in the intellectual and ecclesiastical life of the nation.

Regarded from this standpoint the interest of the period covered by the historical plays of Shakspeare, the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth centuries (I neglect the epilogue), is to the modern student largely social and constitutional. He fixes upon the concession of the Great Charter of 1215, and its many subsequent confirmations; upon the long-drawn struggle between the Crown and the baronial oligarchy; upon the growing sense of national independence and national unity; the increasing restiveness alike of barons, Church and people against the papal encroachments of an Innocent III or a Boniface VIII; and, above all, perhaps, on the development of the system of central representation and its consummation in Edward the First's model parliament of 1295. He does not neglect the struggles of Henry III to retain the French inheritance of his grandmother Eleanor of Aquitaine; still less the successful attempt of Edward I to incorporate Wales, and his fortunate failure to annex Scotland to the English Crown. Passing on to the fourteenth century he will note the rapid disintegration of the manorial system; the personal emancipation of the villeins and their divorce from the land; the growing importance of the woollen trade and the consequent transition from arable cultivation to pasture; from the growing of corn to the breeding of sheep. He will analyse the social and economic effects of the visitation of the bubonic plague, known in those days as the Black Death, and the causes of the Insurrection of 1381. The ecclesiastical and political significance of the teaching of John Wycliffe will not escape him, nor the part

played by the Lollards in the social movement of the day. He will trace the development in the powers and privileges of Parliament throughout the reigns of the later Plantagenets and the Lancastrian Kings: *pari passu* he will observe the strength of the baronial oligarchy and its repeated attempts, particularly under weak Kings like Henry III, the second Edward and the second Richard, to supersede the royal authority, and to concentrate all power in the hands of a small knot of ambitious and self-seeking nobles. Finally, he will see the triumph of the oligarchical movement in the Revolution of 1399; in the deposition of Richard of Bordeaux, and the accession of the baronial nominee, Henry of Lancaster.

With the Lancastrian revolution of 1399 we get to the heart of the Snakspearian drama. In that revolution there was much more than the triumph of the oligarchy. Henry of Lancaster came to the throne on the top of the wave of a great Conservative re-action. During the latter half of the fourteenth century England had been threatened with revolution from several quarters: social, constitutional, and ecclesiastical. Henry the Fourth comes into power not merely as the leader of the oligarchical opposition, but as the representative of social order, of ecclesiastical orthodoxy, of parliamentary government. He is acclaimed by his friend, Archbishop Arundel, as the opponent of Lollardy, the friend of the Church, the champion of the rights of property, but, above all, as the nominee of Parliament.

This is the key to the Lancastrian experiment: the attempt to make Parliament the direct instrument of government. That experiment proves to be

a hopeless failure: partly because it is premature; partly because, in the hands of a weak ruler like Henry VI, the Executive is powerless to control the forces of social disorder. Consequently, the whole country is plunged into chaos by the lack of governance characteristic of Lancastrian rule; all the evils of a bastard feudalism reappear without the redeeming features which had justified and ennobled the system in earlier days; wars break out between noble and noble, county and county, town and town; the administration of justice becomes a byword; if you want a verdict your cause must be "maintained" by a powerful patron; failing that your only chance is to bribe both jury and judge. For detailed proof and illustration of the prevailing evils we may read the Letters of the Paston Family, which present an extraordinarily vivid picture of administrative weakness and social disintegration. The Wars of the Roses were the natural consequence. Only in one aspect were those wars dynastic,—a contest for the Crown between rival families; they were essentially the concentration of a hundred elements of social disorder; the epitome of a period of premature political experiment and consequent lack of governance. That lack was supplied only when, as a result of the battle of Bosworth Field, the Tudor dynasty came to the throne and brought to England the supreme blessing of firm and even-handed justice. Then, for a century, the land had peace.

Such is the essential significance of the period as it unfolds itself to the scientific historian of to-day. But that, it need hardly be said, is not the angle from

which Shakspeare regards this period of history. Shakspeare, it is credibly asserted, had never heard of *Magna Carta*, and we have been pointedly reminded of his omission in recent revivals of the play. But even if he had, there is no reason to suppose that he would have introduced it into *King John*. Why should he? Legal history; the development of institutions; social and economic changes; these are not the stuff of which plays are constructed. However interesting to a modern investigator, they are not susceptible of dramatic delineation. From all these topics, therefore, Shakspeare turns aside. With true dramatic instinct, he seizes upon the personal aspects of the disorders of the time; he paints in strongly contrasted colours, not the absolutism of a Plantagenet and the constitutionalism of a Lancaster, but the wayward caprice, the shifty sentimentalism of a Richard of Bordeaux and the stern statesmanship, the firm grip of a Henry Bolingbroke. But the moral, ethical and political, is not neglected. Henry's success is wholly external. If the "redelessness" of Richard lost him a crown, the unscrupulous usurpation of Henry rendered its acquisition a mockery of happiness.

The first line of *Henry the Fourth* (Part I) strikes the ethical keynote of the drama:

"So shaken as we are, so wan with care."

The successful politician reaps what he has sown; himself consumed by remorse; his throne threatened by the revolt of disappointed partisans; his household divided by jealousy and mistrust. It was

essential to the purpose of the dramatist that the reign of a usurping monarch, justified though the "usurpation" might be before the tribunal of impartial history, should be represented as throughout "unquiet." Nor did the representation do violence to the truth of history. The King, on his unrestful deathbed, himself realizes the nemesis:

> "God knows, my son,
> By what bye-paths and indirect crook'd ways
> I met this crown, and I myself know well
> How troublesome it sat upon my head."

But the crime was personal; it had been expiated by suffering; the young Prince Henry would inherit, by undisputed title, an untainted crown:

> "To thee it shall descend with better fruit,
> Better opinion, better confirmation."

Yet the younger Henry cannot feel that the expiation is complete when, on the eve of Agincourt, at the most solemn moment of his life and reign, he comes face to face with God:

> "Not to-day, O Lord,
> O not to-day, think not upon the fault
> My father made in compassing the crown!
> I Richard's body have interred anew,
> And on it have bestowed more contrite tears
> Than from it issued forced drops of blood;
> Five hundred poor I have in yearly pay,
> Who twice a day their withered hands hold up,

Toward heaven to pardon blood ; and I have built
Two chantries, where the sad and solemn priests
Sing still for Richard's soul. More will I do ;
Though all that I can do is nothing worth,
Since that my penitence comes after all,
Imploring pardon."

The heroic personal qualities of Henry V fend off, but only for the moment, the doom of his house. With the accession of Henry VI, the type of saintly weakness, as his father was the type of saintly strength, nemesis reasserts itself, and the curse pronounced, before the deposition of Richard II, by the sturdy Bishop of Carlisle is, at last, fulfilled :

" My lord of Hereford here whom you call King,
Is a foul traitor to proud Hereford's King :
And if you crown him let me prophesy,
The blood of English shall manure the ground,
And future ages groan for this foul act ;
Peace shall go sleep with Turks and Infidels,
And in this seat of peace tumultous war
Shall kin with kin and kind with kind confound ;
Disorder, horror, fear and mutiny,
Shall here inhabit, and this land be called
The field of Golgotha and dead men's skulls.
O, if you raise this house against this house
It will the wofullest division prove,
That ever fell upon the cursed earth.
Prevent it, resist it, let it not be so,
Lest child, child's children cry against you—Woe."

Thanks to the light-hearted folly, and still more to

the bitter political partisanship of Queen Margaret of Anjou, the dynastic strife comes to a head and the country is plunged into the chaos of the "Wars of the Roses." Modern research* reveals the causes of those wars in a somewhat different light; but detailed examination of this point must be deferred. Enough that Shakspeare works out in the later parts of *Henry VI* the nemesis which had dogged the fortunes of the House of Lancaster ever since its accession to the throne. The crown reverts to the elder branch of the Plantagenets in the person of Edward IV, but a fatal personal taint forbids that the reversion should be permanent. Edward IV, though popular with the traders, exhibited the cruelty and cynical self-indulgence characteristic of the Italian tyrants. The sins of the father were visited upon the children, who became the victims of the trickery and cruelty of Richard of Gloucester. Richard's usurpation is crowned with temporary success, but the civil war is soon renewed, and Richard's death on Bosworth field and the victory of Henry, Earl of Richmond, usher in the brilliantly successful dictatorship of the Tudors.

With sure dramatic instinct Shakspeare passes in silence over the reign of Henry VII, a period of patient preparatory policy, and then in the sumptuous pageant of *Henry VIII*, he reveals the Tudor Monarchy at the zenith of its splendour and success. The series of English Chronicle Plays ends appropriately with the baptism of the Princess Elizabeth, and with a prophetic vision of the high

*Cf. for example Mr. Charles Plummer's scholarly introduction to Sir John Fortescue's *Governance of England*.

destiny reserved for the sceptre of the Virgin Queen :

" Truth shall nurse her ;
Holy and heavenly thoughts still counsel her :
She shall be loved and feared : her own shall bless her ;
Her foes shake like a field of beaten corn,
And hang their heads with sorrow : good grows with her :
In her days every man shall eat in safety,
Under his own vine, what he plants ; and sing
The merry songs of peace to all his neighbours.
God shall be truly known ; and those about her
From her shall read the perfect ways of honour,
And by those claim their greatness, not by blood."

Such in rough and rapid summary is Shakspeare's reading of an important period of English history. Two questions naturally suggest themselves : first, how far can he be accepted as a trustworthy guide ; and, secondly, what is the moral, if any, which he intends to point ?

Whether Shakspeare ought to be accepted as an " authority " for the period of which he treats is, maybe, an open question ; but it is quite certain that he has been so accepted. Two very distinguished Englishmen of the eighteenth century were not ashamed to confess that they derived their knowledge of that period of English history exclusively from Shakspeare, and multitudes, without confessing it, have been content to do the same. Even the professed student finds it difficult to eradicate impressions of historical characters first derived from Shakspeare. No amount of scientific research, no

reiteration of "Historic Doubts" can avail, for the generality of mankind, to erase the lines or even to soften the tones of Shakspeare's portrait of Richard III.

In this case there is, perhaps, no sufficient ground for questioning its substantial accuracy, and such ground as there is may be more fittingly discussed in reference to the play itself. Summarily it may be said that although Shakspeare is primarily a playwright, not an historian, his history is, in the main, indisputably sound. He occasionally invented, it is true, both characters and incidents; he transposed scenes; foreshortened events; and varied sequence and chronology. But, even to secure dramatic effect, Shakspeare never deliberately falsified history. "What he invented," as the judicial Hallam said, "is as truly English, as truly historical in the large sense of moral history as what he read." A distinguished French critic has arrived at a similar conclusion:

"Après lui," writes M. Mézières, "la critique historique a fait des progrès; elle a fouillé les archives locales et elle en a tiré des documents dont on ne soupçonnait pas l'existence au XVIe siècle; mais en corrigeant les fautes du poète, elle n'a pas révisé ses jugements. Elle a, au contraire, donné des preuves nouvelles de sa penétration, qui parait d'autant plus admirable qu'il est moins instruit."* Thus Shakspeare may be trusted, as regards the essential verities of history, not to mislead even the uninitiated and the unwary. A further question remains. What moral, if any, are we meant to draw? How far does

*Shakspeare; Seŝ œuvres et ses critiques, pp. 185, 186.

the commentator reveal his own opinions; his own attitude towards the great problems of Ethics and Politics? Reams have been written on this question. On the one hand, the critics have laboured to establish the thesis that Shakspeare is wholly "impersonal"; the "mere dramatist"; with no thought beyond the dramatic development of his own characters, with no purpose except to excite and maintain interest in the passing show. On the other, they have sought to divine the personal opinions which lie behind the utterances of his characters, and to penetrate to the innermost convictions of the dramatist.

Shakspeare is claimed by all the creeds, positive and negative; he was a "sound Catholic"; a "stout Protestant"; an "Elizabethan adiaphorist"; a "complete freethinker." Happily, a discussion of this point is beyond my immediate purpose.*

The ethical moral of the Chronicle Plays is plain enough. Their theme, as Mr. Dowden has said, "is the success and the failure of man to achieve noble practical ends. Shakspeare observed that there are two classes of men in the world, those who use the right means of effecting their ends, who, if they want fruit, plant fruit trees; and secondly, those who will not accept the fact, who try to get fruit by various ingenious methods, only not by planting fruit trees. Success in the visible, material world, the world of noble positive action is the measure of greatness in the English historical

*Readers who may desire to pursue this topic may refer to Churton Collins: *Studies in Shakspeare*; Fr. Sebastian Bowden: *The Religion of Shakspeare*; W. S. Lilly: *Shakespear's Protestantism* (*Fortnightly Review* 81, 966); Edward Caird: *Some Characteristics of Shakespeare* *Contemporary Review*, No. lxx; Vehse: *Shakespeare als Protestant, Politika Psychotog und Dichter.*

plays; and the ideal heroic character of those plays is that of the King who so gloriously succeeded Henry V."

It is unnecessary, at the present stage of our enquiry, to illustrate in detail the truth of Mr. Dowden's illuminating judgement. You may see it in *King John*, the man untrue to himself, and unfaithful, therefore, to his trust: a traitor to his people; in Richard II "redeless" and irresponsible; a poseur; a sentimentalist; an amateur in the stern business of politics; as a ruler an irreparable failure; in the success, transitory and partial, of the cool calculating statesman—that "vile politician" Bolingbroke; in the failure of a Henry VI weak in saintliness; in the failure of a Richard III strong in criminality; above all in the triumph, represented by Shakspeare as unquestioned and complete, of his ideal man of action Henry V.

As to the ethical moral which the Chronicle Plays are intended to point there is, then, little ambiguity. Nor has the question evoked serious controversy. It is far otherwise in regard to the poet's attitude towards problems of government and politics. According to one view, Shakspeare was entirely free from any semblance of partizanship in politics as in religion, and gives no indication of his personal opinions on matters of high policy. Other critics claim him as an advanced democrat, and others again as "a sound Tory." If by the latter term is meant a believer in the indefeasible, hereditary, divine right of Kings, Shakspeare would plainly fail to pass the test. He is not a Tory of the school of Sir Robert Filmer, or even of Dr. Johnson. It will not

escape notice, in this connection, that the most extravagant monarchical sentiments are put into the mouth of one of the weakest types of crowned rulers :

" Not all the water in rough rude sea
Can wash the balm from an anointed King."

But such high doctrine does not avail to preserve the Crown to a " redeless " ruler like Richard of Bordeaux. Not that rebellion can ever be justified. If Richard II, indisputably a legitimate Sovereign, must pay the penalty of personal unfitness for high place, Henry IV must be made to suffer for lawless usurpation. Such was Shakspeare's theory of monarchy. In true Kingship, crowned or uncrowned, he was plainly a believer. Who that had the fortune to be a subject of Queen Elizabeth could be otherwise ? But it was personal character, not the anointing balm, which conferred the Divine Right to claim obedience, as we see clearly enough in Coriolanus no less than in Henry V. For demagogues, on the other hand, and for their dupes, Shakspeare reserves his most mordant sarcasm and most unmitigated scorn. Not even the Cleon of Aristophanes is a more superbly satirical portrait than Jack Cade. Shakspeare, too, had little sympathy with that theory of monarchy which the Stuarts, metaphysicians rather than statesmen, introduced into England, and upon which, to their destruction, they relied. He had even less with the creed of anarchy, which claimed temporary allegiance after the overthrow of the monarchy and the parliamentary constitution. Least of all could he have been a " leveller "

or an equalitarian. He believed in order, degree, subordination. The great speech of Ulysses in *Troilus and Cressida* may indeed be taken as a summary embodiment of his political creed :

" The heavens themselves, the planets, and this centre,
Observe degree, priority, and place,
Insisture, course, proportion, season, form,
Office, and custom, in all line of order :
And therefore is the glorious planet Sol,
In nobler eminence enthron'd and spher'd
Amidst the other ; whose medicinable eye
Corrects the ill aspects of planets evil,
And posts, like the commandment of a king,
Sans check, to good and bad : but when the planets,
In evil mixture, to disorder wander,
What plagues and what portents ! what mutiny !
What raging of the sea ! Shaking of earth !
Commotion in the winds ! frights, changes, horrors,
Divert and crack, rend and deracinate
The unity and married calm of states
Quite from their fixture ! O, when degree is shak'd,
Which is the ladder to all high designs,
The enterprise is sick ! How could communities,
Degrees in schools, and brotherhoods in cities,
Peaceful commerce from dividable shores,
The primogenitive and due of birth,
Prerogative of age, crowns, sceptres, laurels,
But by degree, stand in authentic place ?
Take but degree away, untune that string,
And, hark, what discord follows ! each thing meets
In mere oppugnancy : the bounded waters

Should lift their bosoms higher than the shores,
And make a sop of all this solid globe :
Strength should be lord of imbecility,
And the rude son should strike his father dead :
Force should be right ; or, rather, right and wrong,
Between whose endless jar justice resides,
Should lose their names, and so should justice too.
Then everything includes itself in power,
Power into will, will into appetite ;
And appetite, an universal wolf,
So doubly seconded with will and power,
Must make perforce an universal prey,
And last eat up himself."

Such sentiments were natural, indeed inevitable, to an Elizabethan Englishman living and writing at the apogee of the Tudor dictatorship and deeply impressed by the debt which England owed to a remarkable succession of great rulers.* From more than one quarter national independence had been threatened, national unity endangered. Both had been saved by a combination of firmness, sagacity and tact, and, above all, by the instinctive sympathy between ruler and ruled. The moral could hardly have failed to impress itself upon a mind much less sensitive than that of Shakspeare. He espoused no party ; he was no slavish adherent of any political doctrine ; he uttered no shibboleths. The only cause in which he believed unreservedly was that of

*Cf. Raleigh : *The England of Shakspeare*, p. 11.—"It is true that for the most part he takes his stand with average humanity, and is hardly ever eccentric. But he had a meaning, even while Drama was his trade ; in this matter of politics he was on the side of the Government, and of all but a very few of the people who were proud to call themselves the subjects of the Queen."

England; and England, though not, as in Bishop Bale's *Kinge Johan*, named in the list of characters, was the hero of every one of the Chronicle Plays. Take John of Gaunt's superb apostrophe:

"This royal throne of Kings, this sceptered isle,
This earth of majesty, this seat of Mars,
This other Eden, demi-paradise;
This fortress built by Nature for herself
Against infection and the hand of war;
This happy breed of men, this little world,
This precious stone set in the silver sea,
Which serves it in the office of a wall,
Or as a moat defensive to a house,
Against the envy of less happier lands;
This blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this England,
This nurse, this teeming womb of royal Kings,
Feared by their breed, and famous by their birth."*

This must be put side by side with the reasoned discourse of Ulysses to complete the political apologia of Shakspeare. But in that apologia there was nothing peculiar to Shakspeare. It was the accepted creed of every genuine Englishman in Elizabethan England. The break up of the unified system of the Middle Ages: the virtual supersession of the Holy Roman Empire; the partial withdrawal of allegiance from the Papacy; the gradual emergence of strong national monarchies; the consolidation of great nation-States; the tardy realization of national unity and national identity in France and Spain; the

* *Richard II*, Act II, Sc. I.

prolonged contest between Bourbon and Habsburg—all this served to emphasise the uniquely fortunate position of

> " This fortress built by nature for herself,
>
> . . . . . .
>
> This precious stone set in the silver sea."

Not even a dullard could escape the contagion of enthusiasm, nor fail to realize the blessings of national unity and national independence. Still less could he ignore the sole condition upon which a continuance of those blessings must depend:

> " This England never did—nor never shall—
> Lie at the proud foot of a conqueror,
> But when it first did help to wound itself.
> Now these her princes are come home again,
> Come the three corners of the world in arms,
> And we shall shock them: naught shall make us rue,
> If England to itself do rest but true."

CHAPTER II

THE TROUBLESOME REIGN OF KING JOHN

"That smooth-fac'd gentleman, tickling commodity—
Commodity, the bias of the world;

. . . . . .

Since kings break faith upon commodity,
Gain, be my lord!—for I will worship thee."

FOR reasons discussed in the last chapter it was decided to begin the detailed study of the Chronicle Plays, not with the tetralogy (*Henry VI—Richard III*) which represents Shakspeare's apprenticeship in this form of drama, but with the play which forms a prologue—though at first sight a somewhat detached one—to the whole historical series, King John.

The reign of King John was, alike by dramatic and by historical tradition, "troublesome." Not that it is on that account the less attractive either to the playwright or to the historian. To the latter the reign is full of interest. Apart from the personality of the King, which affords material for a psychological study of extraordinary subtlety there are several points of first rate historical significance. There is, firstly, the testing of the quality and efficiency of the administrative system initiated by Henry I, perfected by Henry II, and further refined and developed during Richard Cœur de Lion's protracted absences,

by a succession of able and devoted ministers. Even a pitiless and rapacious tyrant like John cannot entirely deprive his subjects of all the benefits of the "rule of law" which is the abiding monument to the sagacity and skill of the first of the Plantagenets. It was John, indeed, who under the stress of political and still more of financial necessity, made, probably an unconscious, but none the less important contribution to the evolution of English parliamentary institutions. Early in 1213 he summoned to a Council at St. Albans four men and the reeve from every township on the royal demesne in order to assess the amount of compensation to be paid to the Bishops who had suffered loss owing to the recent interdict. A few months later he summoned by a writ addressed to the Sheriff of every county, four discreet Knights to attend a national council, "ad loquendum nobiscum de negotiis regni nostri." In these two summons we have the first clear instances of county and borough representation in the great central Council of the nation.

Already, however; it had become abundantly clear that the administrative system bequeathed by Henry II to his successors was capable of perversion into a peculiarly effective instrument of financial extortion, pressing upon all classes of the people, and particularly upon those which, like the Baronage and the Church had much to lose. The result of this unpleasant discovery was the demand for a charter of liberties, which took final shape in the famous document of 1215. The precise significance of the concessions then made has lately been the subject of hot contention among students of English

law and institutions.* Obviously it is no part of our immediate business to mingle in the fray.

Another topic of high significance is the severance between the insular and continental interests of the Norman-Angevin Kings of England. Lord Macaulay emphasized the importance of this severance with characteristic vigour and directness: "The talents and even the virtues of England's first six French Kings were a curse to her. The follies and vices of the seventh were her salvation. . . John was driven from Normandy." He lost, indeed, not Normandy only, but Maine, Anjou, and Touraine as well.

To estimate the political and social consequences which ensued upon the surrender of these French provinces would take us too far afield. Enough to say summarily that this event marked an important stage in the nationalization of England; in the process by which England became conscious of her national unity and national identity. The great landholders were compelled to make a definite and final choice between their English and their continental interests; they had to become either English nobles or Norman barons; either the aristocratic leaders of the English people, who were rapidly advancing towards a consciousness of nationality, or the feudatories of the French Crown. The position of the Monarchy

* Cf. W. S. McKechnie, *Magna Carta*; Petit Dutaillis: *Studies Supplementary to Stubbs' Constitutional History*: E. Jenks; *The Myth of Magna Carta* (*Independent Review*, November, 1904) and Pollock and Maitland, *History of English Law*. The older and till recently generally accepted view will be found in Hallam: *Middle Ages* (ii, 447), Stubbs; *Constitutional History* and Preface to *Walter of Coventry* (Rolls Series); Boutmy *Development of English Constitution* (Eng. trans.) Rudolph von Gneist: Hist. of Eng. Parliament (Eng. trans.), and Ranke: *English History*, vol. i, 54.

was affected not less perceptibly than that of the baronage. The King was brought, as never before since the Norman Conquest, face to face with his people. He became, as Bishop Stubbs has said, " more distinctly dependent on the goodwill of the nation . . . and henceforth England was ruled more distinctly on national principles for Englishmen and by Englishmen."*

King John's quarrel with Pope Innocent III produced, in the long run, a similar effect. Ever since the Norman Conquest the Church had, in the main, espoused the cause of the King against the feudality. John's break with the Papacy ; the interdict ; the oath of excommunication and deposition ; the complete and humiliating surrender of the King, broke the tradition, and led to a marked change in the national attitude towards the Pope. Thenceforward two parties were clearly discernible in the English Church : an ultramontane party which clung more closely than ever to the connexion with Rome, maintained through the Papal legates ; and a national party which, under Henry III, found its leaders in men like Bishop Grosseteste, Archbishop Edmond Rich, the brothers Cantelupe, Bishops of Hereford and Worcester respectively, and Simon de Montfort ; a party which, under Edward I, was led by the King himself, and under Edward III was championed by John Wyclif.

Of these various aspects and interests of the reign it was the last, the relations between King and Papacy, which appealed most powerfully to the Elizabethan dramatists. Of *Magna Carta* Shakspeare

*Stubbs : Preface to *Walter of Coventry*, ii, 37.

has nothing whatever to say. The chances are that he had never heard of it; there is no allusion to it in the earlier play out of which Shakspeare's *King John* is quarried; and any attempt to exploit it dramatically would have left an Elizabethan audience cold. The Great Charter was in fact discovered as a political asset by the lawyer politicians who dominated the early Stuart parliaments.

If, however, the audiences at the Globe would have yawned over *Magna Carta*, nothing could have been devised better calculated to excite them than the story of John's dealings with the Papacy, and the political moral deduced by Shakspeare from his survey of the reign: the supreme necessity of national unity. External dangers had grievously threatened England's national independence during the first thirty years of Queen Elizabeth's reign: the Guise ascendancy in Scotland; the possible combination of the two great continental kingdoms, France and Spain, against the "third rate isle half lost among her seas"; the adverse verdict given by the Papacy upon Queen Elizabeth's rights; the decree of deposition issued against her; above all, the menacing progress upon the continent of the Counter-Reformation—these things were fresh in the memory of the Londoners who flocked to the Globe, and they naturally inspired the playwrights who catered for their entertainment.

We can imagine the enthusiasm with which a scene like the following would be greeted by men who but a few years ago (1570) had passed an Act forbidding the publishing of Papal Bulls in England; who had lived through the days of the St. Bartholomew (1572)

and the "Spanish Fury" at Antwerp (1576); who, as a reply to the Jesuit Mission had banded themselves together in a formal association to protect the Queen's life (1584); who had rejoiced in the timely discovery of Throgmorton's plot for the assassination of Elizabeth (1584) and the unmasking of Babington's conspiracy (1586); who had listened with pride to the tales of Drake's exploits in the Spanish main, at Cadiz and elsewhere; of the last fight of the "Revenge"—"the one against the fifty-three"—in the Azores; and of Sir Richard Grenville's heroic death; by men, above all, who had so lately escaped the dangers threatened by Philip's great Armada.

KING PHILIP:

"Here comes the holy Legate of the Pope."

PANDULPH:

"Hail, you anointed deputies of Heaven!—
To thee, King John, my holy errand is.
I, Pandulph, of fair Milan cardinal,
And from Pope Innocent the Legate here,
Do in his name religiously demand,
Why thou against the Church, our holy mother,
So wilfully dost spurn: and, force perforce,
Keep Stephen Langton, chosen Archbishop
Of Canterbury, from that holy See?
This, in our foresaid holy Father's name,
Pope Innocent, I do demand of thee."

KING JOHN:

"What earthly name to interrogatories

Can task the free breath of a sacred King ?
Thou canst not, Cardinal, devise a name
So slight, unworthy, and ridiculous,
To charge me to an answer, as the Pope.
Tell him this tale ; and from the mouth of England
Add thus much more,—that no Italian priest
Shall tithe or toll in our dominions :
But as we under Heaven are supreme head,
So, under Him, that great Supremacy,
Where we do reign, we will alone uphold,
Without the assistance of a mortal hand :
So tell the Pope ; all reverence set apart
To him and his usurp'd authority."

KING PHILIP :

" Brother of England, you blaspheme in this."

KING JOHN :

" Though you, and all the kings of Christendom,
Are led so grossly by this meddling priest,
Dreading the curse that money may buy out;
And, by the merit of vile gold, dross, dust,
Purchase corrupted pardon of a man,
Who in that sale sells pardon from himself;
Though you and all the rest, so grossly led,
This juggling witchcraft with revenue cherish ;
Yet, I alone, do me oppose
Against the Pope, and count his friends my foes."

PANDULPH :

" Then, by the lawful power that I have,
Thou shalt stand curs'd, and excommunicate :

And blessed shall he be that doth revolt
From his allegiance to an heretic;
And meritorious shall that hand be call'd,
Canónized, and worshipped as a saint,
That takes away by any secret course
Thy hateful life."*

The question naturally obtrudes itself, how far this famous scene expressed the personal sentiments of the poet; nor has it lacked disputants. One critic, eminently cautious and sane, goes so far as to say "that it is scarcely open to doubt" that King John's attitude towards the Papal Legate does, in the main, reflect that of Shakspeare himself "as of every Protestant Englishman of the Elizabethan era.†" Mr. W. S. Lilly, on the contrary, finds in the scene "no sort of warrant for Shakspeare's alleged Protestantism."‡

Father Bowden claims to have established two conclusions: "First, that Shakspeare was not on the winning side in his day in politics or religion; that he carefully avoided all those appeals to popular prejudice about monks and nuns, popes and cardinals which form the farcical element of so many plays of his time; nay, more, that in adapting old plays he carefully expunged every satire of the ancient faith. Secondly, that he not only habitually extols the old order of things, but that he studiously depreciates the new."§

* Act III, Sc. 1.

† Professor F. S. Boas: *Shakspeare and his Predecessors*, p. 241.

‡ Fortnightly Review (81, p. 973.) Cf. also Father Sebastian Bowden, *The Religion of Shakspeare.*

§ *Religion of Shakespeare*, p. ix.

The contention is endless, and not, it would seem, particularly edifying. But, while not prepared to affirm that Shakspeare was a Protestant, I confess that I find the supposed evidence of his adherence to the older faith even less convincing. I am disposed, therefore, to take refuge behind a characteristically wise utterance of Sir Walter Raleigh, with whom the last word in the matter would seem to rest. "Shakspeare," he writes, "is English to the core . . . The English love of compromise is strong in him. If it be examined it will be found to have its origin not in intellectual timidity, but in a deep reverence for the complexity of human nature, and for the sacredness of the elemental instincts."

In regard to the argument deduced from this particular scene in *King John*, it is pertinent to observe that Shakspeare took it lineally and almost verbatim from the corresponding scene in *The Troublesome Reign*. On this account, and others, it is worth while to quote the latter in full:

"Know John, that I Pandulph, Cardinal of Millaine, and Legate from the See of Rome, demaund of thee in the name of our holy Father the Pope Innocent, why dost (contrarie to the lawes of our holy mother the Church, and our holye Father the Pope) disturbe the quiet of the Church, and disannul the election of Stephen Langton, whom his holiness hath elected Archbishop of Canterburie; this in his holie name I demaund of thee?"

JOHN: "And what hast thou or the Pope thy maister to doo to demaund of me, how I employ mine own? Know, Sir Priest, as I hõnour the Church

and holy Churchmen, so I scorne to be subject to the greatest Prelate in the world. Tell thy Maister so from me, and say, John of England said it, that never an Italian Priest of them all, shal either have tythe, tole, or polling penie out of England ; but as I am King, so will I raigne next under God ; supreame head both over spiritual and temrall : and hee that contradicts me in this, Ile make him hoppe headlesse."

KING PHILIP : " What, King John, know you what you say, thus to blaspheme against our holy father the Pope ? "

JOHN : " Philip, though thou and all the Princes of Christendome suffer themselves to be abusde by a Prelate's slauery, my minde is not of such base temper. If the Pope will bee King in England, let him winne it with the sword. I know no other title he can alleage to mine inheritance."

CAR. : " John, is this thine answer ? "

JOHN : " What then ? "

CAR : " Then I, Pandulph of Padua, Legate from the Apostolike See, do in the name of Saint Peter and his successor, our holy Father Pope Innocent, pronounce thee accursed, discharging every one of thy subiectes of all dutie and fealtie that they doo owe to thee, and pardon and forgiveness of sinne to those or them whatever which shall carrie armes against thee, or murder thee : this I pronounce, and charge all good men to abhoore thee as an excommunicate person."

This passage is typically illustrative of the relation in which the earlier play stands to the later. The later is, in form and structure, merely an adaptation of

the earlier. There is no evidence that, in this case, Shakspeare went any further for his materials; none to suggest an independent reading of Holinshed's Chronicle. So close, indeed, as we shall see, is the connection between the two plays that at least one eminent critic has suggested that "The Troublesome Reign" was, in fact, an earlier essay from Shakspeare's own pen.* Nor does this view lack substantial arguments in its favour. *The Troublesome Reign of King John with the Discovery of King Richard Cœur de Lion's base son (vulgarly called the Bastard Faulconbridge), also the death of King John at Swinstead Abbey* was first published anonymously in 1591, —only four or five years before the date usually assigned to Shakspeare's *King John*. A second edition, published (1611) before Shakspeare's death, bore the initials "W. Sh." In a third, published in 1622, six or seven years after Shakspeare's death, the authorship was boldly ascribed to W. Shakspeare. This in itself proves nothing; but the weight of critical opinion is decidedly adverse to the view that in *King John* Shakspeare was merely revising an early composition of his own. Not that the critics can decide who did write the earlier play. Greene, say some; Peele, Marlowe, Lodge, say others.† The authorship, in truth, is wholly uncertain. What is certain is that *The Troublesome Reign*, as

* W. J. Courthope: *History of English Poetry*, iv, pp. 58-62 and p. 463 *seq.*

† Mr. Courthope argues in effect that *The Troublesome Reign* must be from Shakspeare's own pen, since no one but Shakspeare could have written it. Thus he writes of the earlier play:

"In the energy and dignity of the State debaters, the life of the incidents, the variety and contrast of the characters and the power of conceiving the onward movement of a great historical action, there is a quality of dramatic workmanship exhibited in the play quite above the genius of Peele, Greene, or even Marlowe" (Op. cit., iv, 465).

regards external events, is practically identical with *King John*. From it Shakspeare borrowed the main lines of the character of Philip Faulconbridge, who is, according to Holinshed, historical; he got also the unhistorical character of Chatillon; he reproduced the confusion between two historical characters: Leopold, Duke of Austria, by whom Richard Cœur de Lion was imprisoned in 1193, and Count Vidomar of Lymoges, before whose castle of Chaluz Richard fell in 1199; he followed it again as regards the duration of the action, and, in particular, in the foreshortening of events between the death of Prince Arthur in 1203 and the offer of the English crown to Lewis, the French Dauphin, in 1215; lastly, he took from the earlier play the happy idea of representing Prince Arthur as a child instead of a young man of eighteen, so heightening the emphasis and eliciting the sympathy of the audience. All this Shakspeare owed to the author of *The Troublesome Reign*. While, however, he borrowed the dramatic digest of historical events, while he reproduced precisely the framework of the earlier play, he himself supplied the philosophical inspiration of the drama. The earlier play contains no hint of a pivotal idea. It is Shakspeare who exhibits the persons of his drama as inspired throughout the action by motives of mere expediency: "That smooth-faced gentleman, tickling commodity." By this means he converts a Protestant polemic into an ethical commentary upon political action; he substitutes for a series of loosely connected historical scenes a coherent study of human motive; he transmutes an appeal to the patriotic passions of Elizabethan

Englishmen into a drama which possesses a living interest for all students of humanity to whatever country they may belong, in whatever age they may live. Of such is the eternal Kingdom. Superficially a mere "adapter"; in essence a transmuter of base metal into fine gold. Thus does Shakspeare conform to the famous canon of Aristotelian criticism—the law of the universal; thus has he learnt already the secret of enduring poetical life which lies, according to the fine critic already quoted, in "individualising the universal, not in universalising the individual."*

Lest, however, injustice should be done to the anonymous author of *The Troublesome Reign*, it is proper to add that this play is itself founded upon a still earlier drama, and marks at least as great an advance upon it as does *King John* upon *The Troublesome Reign*.

The author of this earliest dramatic version of *Kynge Johan* was John Bale, sometime Bishop of Ossory. Bale was one of the earlier converts to Protestantism, and distinguished himself, and earned the favour of the Protector Northumberland, by the bitterness of his attacks upon the faith he had abjured. He was rewarded by the Bishopric of Ossory in 1552, but was compelled, on Queen Mary's accession, to seek refuge on the continent.

He returned to England soon after Mary's death and about 1560 was appointed to a Prebendal stall at Canterbury, which he held until his death in 1563. Bale's *King John*,† though of slight literary

* W. J. Courthope: *Life in Poetry*, p. 86.

† There are only two editions of this play known to me. One was published by the Camden Society in 1838, edited, from a MS. in the

merit, occupies a uniquely important place in the history of the evolution of the English Chronicle Play. Bale's own motive was purely polemical: to denounce the vices of Rome and to exalt the virtues of English Protestantism; but his play, which was probably produced at the beginning of Edward VI's reign, possesses the distinction of being the earliest extant play in the English language in which historical characters are introduced.

It is not strictly a Chronicle Play, for the historical characters are in a small minority: King John; Cardinal Pandulphus; Raymundus, a monk (possibly historical), and Symon of Swinselt (or Swinstead). The other characters represented are:

England, a widow	played by one actor.
Clergy	
Sedition the Vice ..	played by one actor.
Civil Order	
Commonalty	
Nobility	played by one actor.
Cardinal Pandulpuhs	
Private Wealth	
Dissimulation	played by one actor.
Raymundus	
Symon of Swinselt ..	
Usurped Power ..	played by one actor.
The Pope	
Treason	
Verity	
Imperial Majesty	

possession of the Duke of Devonshire, by Mr. Payne Collier; the other was privately printed in 1907 for the Early English Drama Society, with other Dramatic Writings by Bishop Bale.

The play, or "pageant," as Bale himself describes it, partly conforms, it will be noticed, to the familiar type of the "Morality." It was probably written for performance by the Guild of Ipswich, a city to whose extreme Protestant views it would appeal, and among whose archives the MS. of Bale's pageant was ultimately found. But though in part conforming to the "Morality" type, the chief significance of *Kynge Johan*, in a literary sense, lies in the fact that the author has introduced, side by side with the abstract Virtues and Vices, some characters which are avowedly historical. It thus marks, in a unique way, the transition from the mediæval "Morality" to the modern Chronicle Plays. But for this fact it would doubtless have shared the oblivion to which so much of the polemical literature of the sixteenth century has been rightly relegated.

Not that *Kynge Johan* is wholly devoid of intrinsic merit. At the lowest it may be said to possess the qualities of its defects. Violently partisan in spirit and crude and rough in expression, it has a certain vigour and its successive scenes were well calculated to afford pleasure, if not edification, to a Protestant audience. Many of the sentiments, too, are unexceptionable. Towards the close of the play Imperial Majesty thus admonishes *Civil Order*, *Nobility* and *Clergy*:

"The administration of a prince's governance
Is the gift of God and His high ordinance;
Whom, with all your power you three ought to support
In the laws of God, to all his people's comfort,

First you, the Clergy, in preaching of God's word ;
Then you, Nobility, defending with the sword ;
You, Civil Order, in executing justice."

It is time, however, to return to Shakspeare's *King John*. Marvellous as is the tact and skill with which Shakspeare transformed the materials from which *King John* was fashioned, even the finished product cannot claim a place in the highest class of the Shakspearian dramas. To compare it only with the two plays nearest to it, in order of composition, among the English Historical dramas; it is markedly inferior to *Richard III* as an acting play, and to *Richard II* as a poem. It may be that both as poet and playwright Shakspeare found it less difficult to write direct from the Chronicles than to break up and adapt an existing play. But the fact remains that *Richard III* has proved far more popular alike with actors and playgoers than *King John*, while the unsurpassed loveliness of much of the poetry in *Richard II* cannot be matched in the play under review. There is some inequality of workmanship even in *Richard II* ; but in *King John* it is much more marked. There are, indeed, two scenes in the latter which could hardly be improved : the scene (Act III, Scene 2) in which the King suggests to Hubert de Burgh the murder of his prisoner, Prince Arthur ; and the deeply pathetic scene (Act IV, Scene 1) between the little Prince and his gaoler.

The circumspection with which the King approaches Hubert is suggested with marvellous skill :

KING JOHN:

" Come hither, Hubert—O my gentle Hubert,
We owe thee much: within this wall of flesh
There is a soul counts thee her creditor,
And with advantage means to pay thy love!

. . . . . .

Give me thy hand—I had a thing to say—
But I will fit it with some better time.
By Heaven, Hubert, I am almost ashamed
To say what good respect I have of Thee.

. . . . . .

I had a thing to say—but let it go:
The sun is in the heaven, and the proud day,
Attended with the pleasures of the world,
Is all too wanton and too full of gawds
To give me audience: if the midnight bell
Did, with his iron tongue and brazen mouth,
Sound on into the drowsy ear of night;

. . . . . .

Or if thou couldst see me without eyes,
Hear me without thine ears, and make reply
Without a tongue, using conceit alone,
Without eyes, ears, and harmful sound of word,
Then, in despite of brooded-watchful day,
I would into thy bosom pour my thoughts:
But, ah, I will not!—yet I love thee well;
And, by my troth, I think thou lov'st me well."

HUBERT:

" So well that what you bid me undertake,
Though that my death were adjunct to my act,
By Heaven, I would do it".

KING JOHN:

" Do not I know thou wouldst?
Good Hubert, Hubert, Hubert, throw thine eye
On yon young boy: I'll tell thee what, my friend,
He is a very serpent in my way;
And whereso'er this foot of mine doth tread,
He lies before me:—dost thou understand me?
Thou art his keeper."

HUBERT:

" And I'll keep him so,
That he shall not offend your majesty."

KING JOHN:

" Death."

HUBERT:

" My lord? "

KING JOHN:

" A grave."

HUBERT:

" He shall not live."

KING JOHN:

" Enough—"

Note the effect of the succession of monosyllables with which the scene concludes. Less subtle, but even more effective, is the scene between Hubert de Burgh and Prince Arthur, when the gaoler announces to his little prisoner, or rather allows him to learn from the written decree, that he must suffer torture and blindness.

Side by side, however, with work of this high quality there is a good deal, such as the long drawn

out discussion under the walls of Angiers which is tedious to a reader and still more to an audience.

But, as an acute critic has pointed out, there are in the conception and construction of the drama two flaws which are fundamentally fatal. On the one hand there is a lack of coherence in the plot. Shakspeare makes the murder of Prince Arthur the pivot upon which the whole action of the play depends. But this, " the central theme of the story, is not in sufficiently organic connexion with either the opening or the closing scenes. On the other hand, " the threads of personal and political interest run to some extent crosswise." John is presented, in the main, in a despicable light, and this presentation is in accord with the historical facts. Yet in the opening scenes the sympathies of the spectators are, and are meant to be, on the side of the King. Philip of France challenges

" in right and true behalf
of . . .
Arthur Plantagenet "

the " borrowed majesty " of John. Does Shakspeare acquiesce in the protest of France ? On a superficial view it may appear that he does. The Queen Mother Elinor would seem to hint as much when, after John has loudly asserted " his strong possession and his right," she whispers :

" Your strong possession much more than your right
Or else it must go wrong with you and me."

More closely examined, however, it seems that

Shakspeare leaves the question of right, for the time being, undetermined. The modern historian has no difficulty in deciding that the claim of the uncle was superior to that of the nephew. Strict hereditary succession, in the modern sense, had not yet become the rule of the English monarchy. John was not, therefore, according to legal theory, a usurper.

To Shakspeare, the moralist, the question of "right" depended rather upon the personal qualities of the ruler. John had not, when the play opens, proved his moral or intellectual incapacity for the crown. He had still to be tried. When tried, first by Philip of France, then by Pope Innocent III, and finally by his own barons, he was found utterly wanting. Not until he had again and again proved his unfitness to rule does Shakspeare allow him to lose completely the sympathies of the audience.

Against the arrogant interference of King Philip, even though the latter was the professed champion of the rights of Arthur, sympathy is clearly with the English King. Even more unequivocally is this the case when the Cardinal Legate hurls at his head the decree of excommunication pronounced by the Pope. We learn nothing from the play of the previous course of events to which the Bull of excommunication was but the climax; nothing of John's dispute with the Chapter of Canterbury as to the appointment of a new archbishop; nothing of the mixture of bluster and bad faith with which John conducted his negotiations with the greatest lawyer and one of the most adroit diplomatists who ever sat in the Chair of St. Peter; nothing of the skill with which Pope Innocent III parried and foiled

the blundering and bludgeonly attacks of John; least of all are we put in a position to appreciate the supreme wisdom exhibited by Innocent in the choice of Stephen Langton for the vacant See. As a fact, John had played a strong hand with extraordinary ineptitude; Innocent's complete victory was due, not to the cards which he held, but to the incomparable skill with which he played them.

The play, however, exhibits the Pope and his Legate in a light no more favourable than that in which Philip of France had appeared.

Similarly in regard to the revolt of the nobles For rebellion, as such, Shakspeare asks no sympathy from his audience. If John had steered a straight course; if he had faithfully done his duty by his subjects; if he had repelled with dignity the attacks upon his own independence and that of his country; if he had not proved himself to be as cruel as he was cowardly, there would have been no particle of sympathy for the nobles who, in revolt against their own Sovereign, entered into treasonable negotiations with the enemy of their country. Shakspeare represents the revolt of the great lords as due to their moral indignation against the man whom they hold guilty of Prince Arthur's death. Historically the two events were separated by a dozen years; but Shakspeare is fully justified in regarding them as cause and effect not merely on dramatic but also on moral grounds. This indeed is one of the cases in which "poetry is truer than history."

Still, the case for the baronage is far from clear. That John by his crimes and his cowardice has deserved the worst that can befall him is beyond

dispute. A murderer in intention, if not in fact, he is driven, not on grounds of principle but solely in deference to "commodity," to make an abject submission to Innocent and to hold his kingdom as a fief of the Papacy. To the crime of murder he adds that of treason.

Thus, alike on moral and political grounds, his barons are driven to negotiate with the Dauphin, who has already invaded English soil. But the best of them are sore perplexed as to the course which it behoves them to pursue. Can the crimes of the King be held on their part to justify treason to the State? This hesitation and perplexity of soul is finely reflected in the noble Salisbury's speech to the Dauphin:

"Believe me, Prince,
I am not glad that such a son of mine
Should seek a plaster by contemned revolt,
And heal the inveterate canker of one wound
By making many. . . .
But such is the infection of the time
That, for the health and physic of our right
We cannot deal but with the very hand
Of stern injustice and confuséd wrong."

In this difficult and testing situation one man only keeps a level head. For the murder of Prince Arthur, if murder it was, Falconbridge is full of righteous indignation:

"It is a damned and a bloody work
The graceless action of a heavy hand."

For a moment even he almost loses his head:

" I am amazed methinks and lose my way
Among the thorns and dangers of the world."

But whatever the delinquencies of the King, nothing can justify negotiation with a foreign foe encamped upon English soil : " When powers from home and discontents at home meet in one line." The King himself, craven in spirit and broken in body, would have given way, had not the spirit of Faulconbridge sustained him :

" Be great in act, as you have been in thought,
Let not the world see fears and sad distrust
Govern the motion of a Kingly eye :
Be stirring as the time : be fire with fire ;
Threaten the threatener ; and outface the brow
Of bragging horror : so shall inferior eyes,
That borrow their behaviour from the great,
Grow great by your example and put on
The dauntless spirit of resolution."

This is the language not merely of high courage, but of real political insight and sagacity. It indicates, moreover, the extraordinary rapidity with which, under the stress of responsibility the character of the Bastard had developed.

When he first appears, in the opening scene of the play, the Bastard is a mere adventurer ; a merry fellow with a wit as nimble as it is coarse : " a good blunt fellow," as the King describes him. Recognised both by John and Queen Elinor by his likeness to his father, Richard Cœur de Lion, he surrenders his landed estate of five hundred a year to his half-brother, Robert Falconbridge, and knighted by the King, attaches himself to the fortunes of his father's house.

In France he gets his first introduction to high politics. He sees King Philip of France come forward as the champion of Prince Arthur's rights; he is a witness of the successful resistance offered by the citizens of Angiers to the forces of England and France in turn:

"By heaven, these scroyles of Angiers flout you, Kings,
And stand securely on their battlements."

He hears the proposal of an accommodation between the rival powers suggested by the astute citizens: Lewis the Dauphin is to marry Blanche of Castile, King John's niece, and to carry with her as a dowry the rich provinces of Maine and Poictiers, Anjou and Touraine. The bargain is concluded: the claims of Arthur are forgotten.

This is the cynical transaction which gives the Bastard the chance of pointing the philosophic moral of the play:

"Mad world! mad Kings! mad composition!
John, to stop Arthur's title in the whole,
Hath willingly departed with a part;
And France,—whose armour conscience buckled on,
Whom zeal and charity brought to the field
As God's own soldier,—rounded in the ear
With that same purpose-changer, that sly devil;
That broker, that still breaks the pate of faith,
That daily break-vow; he that wins of all,
Of Kings, of beggars, old men, young men, maids.
. . . . . .
That smooth-fac'd gentleman, tickling commodity,
Commodity, the bias of the world:
. . . . . .

Since Kings break faith upon commodity,
Gain be my lord !—for I will worship thee."

There is one, however, who is not prepared to acquiesce in this base sacrifice of principle to expediency; who cries out upon "commodity." Bitterly does the Duchess Constance rail against "these perjured Kings."

Upon Philip, who would appease her with fair promises, she turns in burning indignation:

"You have beguil'd me with a counterfeit
Resembling majesty; which, being touch'd and tried,
Proved valueless: You are forsworn, forsworn:
You came in arms to spill mine enemies' blood,
But now in arms you strengthen it with yours:
Arm, arm, you heavens against these perjur'd Kings!"

Shakspeare's portrayal of Constance has evoked very high enconiums* from many competent critics. For myself, I confess to finding the scenes which she dominates a trifle tedious. The historical dramas are not strong in heroines: the French princesses who married Plantagenets or Lancastrians added little either to the strength or to the popularity of the English monarchy, and Shakspeare's portraiture does them no injustice. Even the Duchess Constance seems to be in some danger of degenerating into a mere scold, and if one must find a "heroine" in the Chronicle Plays the injured wife of Henry VIII would seem to have claims not inferior to those of the wronged mother of Prince Arthur.

* *e.g.*, from Mrs. Jameson and Mr. Morton Luce.

Nor are the eponymous heroes—always excepting Henry V—particularly heroic. If there is a " hero " in *King John* we must find him in the Bastard Faulconbridge. With widening opportunities, and under the stress of high responsibility, Faulconbridge developes in character, just as John himself degenerates, and in the critical and testing situation at the close of the drama the Bastard alone is true at once to his King, to his country and to himself. But the real hero of *King John* is not named among the persons of the drama. Of Shakspeare's drama, as of Bishop Bale's *Morality*, the true hero is England.

The life and honour of the hero is jeopardised, in part, by external enemies, but, much more, by internal divisions, and domestic disaffection. This is, indeed, the political moral which the whole play is intended to enforce—the peril threatened to a State by the antagonism of classes or creeds ; of political parties and social interests.

The lesson, as was shown in a previous chapter, was not inopportune in Shakspeare's day. A nation, unexpectedly and providentially united, had flung back the insolent challenge of Spain. Catholic had vied with Protestant ; noble with peasant ; knight with burgher, in zeal for the common safety ; in dispelling the danger which had threatened national independence.

That external peril, when Shakspeare wrote, was past. But the omens were not wholly favourable to the prolongation of the domestic truce. Ireland was, of course, in open rebellion. Nearer home, the Government was handling a difficult ecclesiastical situation with conspicuous lack of sympathy and tact ;

Catholics and separatists were alike subjected to a persecution which was at once cruelly severe and almost wholly unprovoked; in Parliament itself murmurings were temporarily hushed only out of respect for the old Queen, who for five and thirty years had served the State so well; who had confronted terrible danger with such high courage; who had, with such conspicuous success, brought the country safely through the greatest crisis in its history. But the concordat between Crown and Parliament was entirely personal and temporary. Nothing, therefore, was more likely than that, as soon as the old Queen was removed, the struggle would break out with a violence all the greater because it was consciously deferred.

Against the terrible danger of such a conflict Shakspeare utters his warning; a warning not the less impressive because it is thrown into dramatic form and drawn from a period sufficiently remote. But though the setting was remote, the poet clearly had in mind the politics, not of John's reign, but of Queen Elizabeth's. Shakspeare was not primarily a politician; he was a playwright; but in becoming a playwright he did not cease to be a citizen. He was indeed nothing if not a patriot, keenly sensitive to every beat of the nation's pulse. He found or made in *The Troublesome Raigne* not only an admirable dramatic digest but an effective political moral. That moral in *King John* he pointed afresh, and the more effectively since the application was oblique:

" If England's Peeres and people joyne in one,
Nor Pope, nor France, nor Spain can do them wrong."

CHAPTER III

RICHARD THE "REDELESS" — THE AMATEUR IN POLITICS

"A brittle glory shineth in this face."

"Nay, if I turn mine eyes upon myself
I find myself a traitor like the rest."

RICHARD II brings us near the heart of Shakspeare's presentation of English history. *King John* supplies the prologue, though a somewhat detached one. In *Richard II* we plunge into the thick of the drama which pivots round the fortunes of the Houses of Lancaster and York. Though not in the theatrical sense a great play, *King John* is, nevertheless, as we have seen, full of interest. To the scientific student of English literature there is indeed no play in the whole series so important, for none illustrates so clearly the evolution of the English Chronicle Play. In this sense *King John* stands alone. Nor is it less interesting to the historian and to the psychologist. But great as is *King John*, *Richard II* is greater. In Shakspeare's *Richard*, as in the history of the reign, there is an air of mystery which is absent from the reign and person of King John. Much laborious research has been expended upon the reign of Richard the redeless, but in spite of it the reign still baffles historical curiosity. Most of all, perhaps, in reference to the character of the King himself.

Among the long list of English Kings there is

none whose real personality it is more difficult to discern. To his contemporaries Richard of Bordeaux was a baffling enigma; after five hundred years his character still remains an unsolved problem. Only as to his personal beauty and his power of fascination is there complete agreement. He was the "sweet lovely rose" that blossomed early and untimely died. But alike in face and character, he lacked virility. His beauty was of the softer kind, not fashioned for the rough times in which his lot was cast. Not that he lacked flashes of manliness and vigour. The spirit of his father and his grandfather shone forth in the lad of fifteen who with brave words put himself at the head of the peasants who followed Wat the Tyler. "What need ye my masters? I am your Captain and your King." Yet this child was the father of the man who, less than twenty years later, allowed himself, in spiritless despondency, to be thrust aside by his cousin Bolingbroke. His whole career and character are full of like contradictions. The kingly sense was rarely absent; he had an unerring eye for a dramatic situation, and for the appropriate attitude. But the dramatic sense often failed to translate itself into action. Richard was never at fault for the apt pose. Too often, however, it remained a pose. He had in fact brilliant endowments, but he lacked real character. Unstable as water he could not permanently excel. Now lovable and affectionate; now cruel and revengeful; by turns vigorous and despondent; cunning and reckless; liberal and tyrannical; generous and small-minded; in a word, consistent only in inconsistency.

Such was the Richard of history so far as we can

discern him ; or rather, the two Richards. For there is some ground for the view that the character of Richard showed a rapid deterioration after the death (in 1394) of his first wife, the good Queen Anne of Bohemia.* That he had good abilities is generally admitted. Mr. J. R. Green speaks indeed of "the brilliant abilities which Richard shared with the rest of the Plantagenets," but declares that they were "marred by a fatal inconstancy and a mean spirit of revenge." Sir James Ramsay finds the "leading features" of his personality in "an extraordinary power of dissimulation and a most unforgiving memory." Bishop Stubbs blames the circumstances of his education and the friends and advisers by whom in his youth he was surrounded: his two half-brothers the Hollands, Robert de Vere, Sir Simon Burley, and Michael de la Pole; and declares that they "spoiled a prince whose life evinces not only many traits of nobility, but certain proofs of mental power."

Richard was only a boy of eleven when he came to the throne, and although there was no formal council of regency he remained more or less in tutelage for the first twelve years of his reign. During the earlier part of that period the King's uncle, John of Gaunt, was the most powerful personage in the realm. Shakspeare's portrait of "time honoured Lancaster" is widely remote from historical fact. It gives the impression of an aged patriot, deeply concerned for the well-being of his country and anxious to guide his headstrong nephew in the ways of wisdom and

* Cf. Stubbs: *Constitutional History*, II, 487; Holton: Trans. Royal Historical Society, Vol. x.

moderation. The historical Gaunt was but fifty-nine at the time of his death, and all through his life had pursued a self-seeking and ambitious policy. Conscious of his unpopularity he refrained on his father's death from making trouble as to the succession, but if he had really desired to train the young Richard in the duties of a "constitutional Sovereign" the opportunity was his in the first days of the reign. There is no evidence that he used it, or desired to use it. By 1383 the opportunity had been lost, for in that year Michael de la Pole became Chancellor, and three years later Lancaster went off to Spain to assert his claim to the throne of Castile. Not until 1389 did he return to England.

Gaunt's departure turned to the advantage not of the King, nor of his minister, Michael de la Pole, but of Gaunt's younger brother, Thomas of Woodstock, Duke of Gloucester. Gloucester now became the leader of the baronial clique, which, with varying fortune, offered an unvarying opposition to the King until the disastrous close of the reign some thirteen years later. Gaunt's heir, Henry, Earl of Derby, was Gloucester's lieutenant, and with them were associated Thomas Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick; Richard Fitzalan, Earl of Arundel; and Thomas Mowbray, Earl of Nottingham. Strong in the support of the anti-Lollard party, led by Archbishop Courtenay, Thomas Arundel, Bishop of Ely, and the aged William of Wykeham; supported also by the House of Commons, the Gloucester party demanded the dismissal of the King's ministers, and in particular of his Chancellor, Michael de

la Pole. The King retorted that he would not at their bidding dismiss a scullion. Gloucester and Derby stuck to their point, and hinted, not obscurely, at the possibility of deposition. Richard, alarmed lest the fate of Edward II should actually befall him, hastily gave way; Michael de la Pole was dismissed and was succeeded as Chancellor by Bishop Arundel; another ecclesiastic, John Gilbert, Bishop of Hereford, became Treasurer in the room of the Bishop of Durham; de la Pole was formally impeached by the Commons; and a commission of regency or reform, headed by the Dukes of Gloucester and York, was appointed for one year to regulate the realm and the household.

The appointment of this Commission was a deliberate attempt to set aside the royal authority, and the King had no difficulty in eliciting from a bench of five judges an opinion that it was an illegal infringement of the prerogative, and rendered the responsible leaders liable to capital punishment.

The opposition promptly took up the challenge; the five Lords—Gloucester, Arundel, Derby, Warwick and Nottingham—laid a charge of high treason against the King's friends, and at Radcot Bridge, in Oxfordshire, they routed the forces of their opponents, under Robert de Vere, Earl of Oxford. In the following year, 1388, the "Merciless Parliament" proceeded to wreak vengeance upon all who had espoused the King's cause. Many of them were already in flight; several were executed; the five judges, after being condemned to death, were sent into perpetual exile in Ireland; the whole party was scattered, and Gloucester's party was again triumphant.

But the triumph of the *Lords Appellant* was short-lived. In 1389 Richard suddenly declared himself of age—he was now twenty-three,—dismissed Gloucester and his colleagues from the Council, and for the next eight years governed the realm with every appearance of wisdom and success. In 1394, however, he had the misfortune to lose his wife, the good Queen Anne of Bohemia, to whom he was devotedly attached, and whose influence had been steadily exerted for the good of her husband and his people. Two years later he signed a twenty-five years truce with France, a truce which was sealed by the King's marriage with a child-princess of France. From that time onwards a rapid deterioration in the King's character is discernible. Craftily and cautiously he began to prepare for the overthrow of the "constitutional" régime and for the establishment of a legal despotism.

The first essential was to strike a blow at his unrelenting enemies who were again conspiring together against him. Three out of the five *Lords Appellant* were, together with Archbishop Arundel, impeached. The Archbishop was sentenced to banishment and confiscation of goods; his brother the Earl was executed; the Earl of Warwick was banished, and Thomas of Woodstock, Duke of Gloucester, the most powerful and envenomed of all the King's enemies, died by violence at Calais. His fate was not undeserved. Two of the Appellants supported Richard in the attack upon their late colleagues, and with other supporters were appropriately rewarded. Henry, Earl of Derby became Duke of Hereford; York's eldest son, the Earl of Rutland, became Duke of

Aumâle; the Earl of Nottingham, Duke of Norfolk; Sir William le Scrope, Earl of Wiltshire; Sir Thomas Percy, Earl of Worcester; Neville, Earl of Westmoreland; the Earl of Somerset, Marquis of Dorset; and le Despenser was created Earl of Gloucester. With most of these noblemen we shall meet again in the Chronicle Plays.

In all the proceedings against the Archbishop and the appellants Richard had been careful to proceed in strict legal form, his chief agents in the Commons being Sir John Bushy the Speaker, Sir Henry Green and Sir William Bagot. In January, 1398, Parliament, which during the proceedings against the Earls had sat at Westminster, reassembled at Shrewsbury, and there, in a session which lasted only three days, it executed a formal and absolute surrender. It annulled all the proceedings of the Merciless Parliament of 1388; it reversed all the sentences then passed, and declared a general amnesty; it granted the customs to the King for life, and finally, by an act of suicide, it delegated all its powers to a Committee of eighteen lords and commoners. Included in the Committee were the King's uncles, Lancaster and York, and his most active partisans, Bushy and Green; the rest were all believed to be friendly to his interests.

The King's victory was complete. It had been attained by a series of measures, contrived with a deliberation and a minute attention to details; executed with a precision, boldness, and skill which seem strangely at variance with the weakness and vacillation displayed by Richard in the remaining months of his unhappy life.

With these months—from September, 1398, to February, 1400—Shakspeare's play is exclusively concerned. Yet the play itself, as I shall show, is unintelligible without a knowledge of the preceding events. In particular, Richard II affords, as has been said, one of the best examples in literature of the "invisible supernatural." The earlier part of it is dominated by the ghost of Gloucester, whose murder at Calais is the real starting point of Shakspeare's drama. Why Shakspeare chose to start from this point is a question to which I shall return. A word must be added here as to the significance of what the greatest of modern historians has described as Richard's "grand stroke of policy." That policy constituted "a resolute attempt not to evade but to destroy the limitations which for nearly two centuries the nation, first through the baronage alone, and later through the united parliament had been labouring to impose upon the King. . . . He [Richard] condescended to no petty illegalities, but struck at once at the root of constitutional government . . . No King urged so strongly the right of the hereditary succession; no King maintained so openly the extreme theory of prerogative."* Nevertheless, as Bishop Stubbs himself confesses, Richard's personal character remains a problem.

To Shakspeare's treatment of that problem it is time to turn.

Richard II is purely historical. Much of the language and nearly all the facts are taken from Holinshed; and, with a few insignificant exceptions, the facts supplied by Holinshed and utilized by

* *Constitutional History*, II, 499-500.

Shakspeare correspond with the truth of history.

The exceptions may be briefly noted at once. I am not aware of any historical warrant for the incidents which, in the play, attend the deathbed of John of Gaunt; for the brutal violence with which Richard treats his dying uncle. As a fact, the relations of uncle and nephew were, in Gaunt's last years, unusually harmonious if not actually cordial. Again, Queen Isabel is represented by Shakspeare, for obvious reasons, as a woman, whereas she was in truth a child of eight or nine.

The death of the Duchess of Gloucester, reported by York in Act II, Scene 2, did not actually take place until after the accession of Henry IV. The Duchess of York, who appears in the play, was not Isabel of Castile, who had died in 1394, but a second wife. She was not, therefore, in reality the mother of Aumerle. Aumerle himself was not with Richard as described in Act III, Scene 2, but had already joined Bolingbroke. But the actual errors are few, and the deviations are dramatically necessary. Most welcome, too, is the exquisite idyll of the gardeners (Act III, Scene 4)—a scene full of wise political reflection and apt analogy. This is wholly the invention of the poet; so is the pathetic parting between Richard and his Queen (Act V, Scene 1). Such additions to or deviations from the facts of history are not merely legitimate and admirable in a dramatic sense; they are genuinely helpful to historical interpretation.

As to the date of the play, external and internal evidence would seem to concur in ascribing it to the year 1593 or 1594; a year or two earlier than *King*

John. Like *King John*, but even more conspicuously, *Richard II* is very unequal in quality. There are isolated speeches and indeed whole scenes of matchless beauty, but there are also undeniable signs of immaturity. The play contains, for example, a very large proportion of rhyming verses, nearly 20 per cent., and not a line of prose. It abounds, too, in puns and other verbal conceits; and there is a certain stiffness and rigidity not merely in diction and versification, but in the grouping of the characters and the set and structure of the scenes. All this points to the fact that when he wrote *Richard II* Shakspeare had not yet attained to entire confidence in the use of materials; he was not yet completely master of his art. The external evidence corresponds with the internal. The play was published, in the first instance anonymously, in 1597, and again with the author's name in 1598, 1608 and 1615. The two later editions contain the deposition scene in Act IV, which for obvious political reasons was omitted from the editions published during the life-time of Queen Elizabeth.

Shakspeare, it should be observed, was not the only one of the Elizabethan dramatists to deal with this difficult reign. There were at least four other plays, and upon one, if not more, Shakspeare may have drawn for materials, just as in the case of *King John* he drew upon *The Troublesome Reign*. We have not, however, got the same direct evidence of the fact, and in view of what has been said of Shakspeare's relation to Holinshed the hypothesis is superfluous. Of these earlier plays, one deals with the Life and Death of Jack Straw and the Peasant Revolt of 1381.

A second, now lost, is described in great detail by Dr. Simon Forman, who witnessed it at the Globe Theatre in 1611; this covered some twenty years of the reign and dealt not only with the Peasant Rising but with the death of the Duke of Gloucester. A third, *King Henry IV and of the Killing of King Richard II*, was performed at the Globe on February 7th, 1601, on the eve of the abortive insurrection of the Earl of Essex.

It was given at the instance of Sir Gilby Merrick, who paid the players an extra forty shillings for the risks—political and financial—they took in performing it. Some critics have attempted to identify this play with Shakspeare's, but the weight of critical opinion is decidedly against them, and it is hard to see how Shakspeare's play could in any way have served the purpose of those who were fomenting the conspiracy of Essex. Finally, there is an unnamed play, of which a few copies were printed in 1870 by Mr. Halliwell-Phillipps from a MS. in the British Museum.* The existence of this *Pre-Shakspearean Richard* was first made generally known to English readers† by an admirable paper contributed by Professor F. S. Boas to the *Fortnightly Review*.‡ That Shakspeare was acquainted with this earlier work is almost certain. It is equally clear that Shakspeare assumed, in his own play, that the earlier one was familiar to his audience. Such familiarity enabled Shakspeare to confine his attention to the last eighteen

* *Egerton MSS*, 1994.

† An account of it had been previously published in the German *Shakspere Jahrbuch*. ‡ September, 1902.

months of Richard's life; it justified passing allusions where detailed description would otherwise have been inevitable, as, for instance, in reference to the recent murder of the Duke of Gloucester, and it explains the point of references which, without a knowledge of the earlier play would have been unintelligible.

The earlier play, which is not only unnamed but anonymous, deals with the period between January, 1382, and Septembar, 1397. It opens on the eve of the child-King's marriage with his first wife, Anne of Bohemia, and ends with the murder of Thomas of Woodstock, Duke of Gloucester. The latter, very highly idealised, is the hero of the play, the interest of which turns upon the struggle between the King's uncles—the Dukes of Gloucester, Lancaster and York, against Richard's upstart favourites the Lord Chief Justice Tresilian and the "caterpillars of the Commonwealth," Greene, Bushy, and Bagot. To the last three, and Scrope, Richard is made (in Act IV) to lease out the whole of the Crown lands and the State revenuse for a cash payment of £7,000 a month. This incident supplies the point of John of Gaunt's famous lament:

"This land of such dear souls, this dear, dear land,
Dear for her reputation through the world,
Is now leased out, I die lamenting it,
Like to a tenement or pelting farm";

and of the reproach levelled at his nephew, the King:

"It were a shame to let this land by lease,

. . . . . .

Landlord of England art thou now, not King?"

Thus the "Pre-Shakspearean" Richard forms an appropriate and, indeed, almost indispensable introduction to Shakspeare's own play. The latter play deals only with the last eighteen months of Richard's life, the action extending from September, 1398, to the end of February, 1400, the supposed date of Richard's death; but these months mark the crisis of the reign, and in one sense of the century: the climax of the prolonged struggle between the Crown and the aristocratic oligarchy; between the new proletariat and the propertied classes; between the Lollards and the Orthodox Churchmen; in short, between the forces of revolution and those of conservatism.

Historically, therefore, no less than dramatically, Shakspeare was justified in concentrating attention upon these critical months. None the less we may reasonably ask why, assuming his desire to make the drama of the Houses of Lancaster and York his central theme, Shakspeare should have gone back to King John for his historical prologue? And why, having done so, should he have neglected the intervening reigns of Henry III, Edward I, Edward II, and Edward III?

To former first question the last chapter was intended to supply an answer; a word must now be said upon the latter. One thing is certain. The omission cannot have been due to the fact that the intervening reigns were unsuitable for dramatic treatment. The struggle between Henry III and Simon de Montfort would have provided at least as promising a theme as that between Richard II and Henry of Lancaster; in Edward I Shakspeare might

have found a hero fit to mate with his Henry V; in the struggle between Edward II and the Lords Ordainers a situation almost precisely parallel to that provided by the reign of Richard of Bordeaux; in Edward III a subject at least as attractive as Henry IV. Was it, perhaps, that for the Lancastrian tetralogy he could rely not merely upon Holinshed but upon the much more vivid narrative of Hall? Or that much of the earlier period had been already effectively covered in a dramatic sense? I am not aware of any play dealing with Henry III and Simon de Montfort; but Peele had already dealt with Edward I; Marlowe had produced a great tragedy in his Edward II, while on Edward III there exists a play which some critics have not hesitated to ascribe with confidence to Shakspeare himself.*

Thus was the gap filled, or nearly filled, between John and Richard II. The earlier years of Richard's reign had already been abundantly dealt with: Shakspeare, therefore, confines himself to the critical months at the end of it. Those months present, indeed, a sufficient summary of the events and interests of the preceding century; nay, of the whole period since the death of King John. To the student of Political Science, more particularly as it is exemplified in the development of the English Constitution, that period has a peculiar significance. It witnessed the conflict of three principles of government: the monarchical, the oligarchical, and the incipiently democratic.

Too frequently it has been represented as a contest

* These plays were reprinted, with others, in two volumes, edited by Thomas Donovan: English Historical Plays. Macmillan, 1896.

between the Crown and the embryonic principle of parliamentary control. That element is not, of course, absent from the struggle ; but much more significant is the conflict between the King and a group of oligarchical nobles, who, primarily in the interests of their own class, sought to supersede the royal authority. Even in the crisis of 1213-1215 the oligarchical temper may be clearly discerned ; much more so in those of 1258, of 1297, of 1310, and 1387. Sometimes the nobles called the Commons to their aid against the Crown ; sometimes (as in 1322) the Crown is in alliance with the Commons against the oligarchy. Such alternating alliances contributed greatly, of course, to the sense of self importance and indeed to the actual powers and privileges of the Commons. But the essential conflict throughout the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries lay between the Crown and the baronial oligarchy, headed, as a rule, by one of the junior members of the royal house ; by a Thomas of Lancaster, a John of Gaunt, a Thomas of Woodstock, and finally by Henry Bolingbroke, Earl of Derby and Duke of Hereford.

Richard II aimed, however, at something more than the overthrow of an aristocratic clique. He deliberately set himself to arrest the movement so noticeable since 1213 towards a definite and formal limitation of the royal authority by means of a representative assembly. Nor was he content like Edward III with the substance of power ; he desired to obtain formal recognition for the theory of absolutism. This proved his undoing. The English people are much more apt to resent the fact than the theory. The Tudor dictatorship evoked little opposition ;

the Stuart theory of monarchy, pedantically defined by James I, and recklessly applied by Charles I, provoked a revolution. Thus it was with Richard II. Had the work of the Parliament of Shrewsbury gone unchallenged; had the principle of delegation been accepted, Richard would have won a conspicuous victory not merely over the oligarchs, but over the principle of parliamentary government, the theory of a limited monarchy.

The challenge might have been long delayed but for the quarrel which broke out between Hereford and Norfolk, the two survivors of the Lords Appellant. The quarrel being reported to the King, Hereford was ordered to lay his case before the Parliament of Shrewsbury. He did so; and after the adjournment of the Parliament the Dukes met in the King's presence at Oswestry; Norfolk then gave Hereford the lie, and a Court of Chivalry decided that the matter should be decided by combat at Coventry on September 16th.

It is at this point that Shakspeare's play opens. The opening is curiously abrupt, and would be unintelligible to a reader unacquainted with the history of the reign. Similar knowledge is plainly assumed on the part of the audience, and Shakspeare, as I have said, could hardly have ventured to assume it, but for the existence of the "pre-Shakspearean Richard." Only to a spectator familiar with the earlier play would the full significance of these opening scenes be apparent. No one could, indeed, fail to perceive the hypocritical nature of Bolingbroke's professed devotion to the King:

" In the devotion of a subject's love,
Tendering the precious safety of my prince,
And free from other misbegotten hate,
Come I appellant to this princely presence."

But it needed familiarity with the earlier play to appreciate the consummate effrontery displayed by Bolingbroke; to note the sarcastic significance of the word " appellant "; to understand that in accusing Norfolk, Hereford was really thrusting at the King himself.

Thus early in the play are the two persons, on whose contrasted characters the psychological interest of the drama mainly pivots, brought into mutual antagonism.

Richard attempts, not without a certain show of dignity, to intervene between the disputants; but more conspicuous than the dignity is the feebleness of the would-be conciliator:

" Wrath, kindled gentlemen be rul'd by me;
Let's purge this choler without letting blood:
This we prescribe, though no physician;—"

Still more feeble is Richard's conduct at Coventry. He it was who had decreed the combat:

" Be ready, as your lives shall answer it,
At Coventry, upon Saint Lambert's day:
There shall your swords and lances arbitrate
The swelling difference of your settled hate."

But just as the combatants enter the lists the King throws his warder down, bids them

" Lay by their helmets and their spears ";

and himself passes judgment upon them. Hereford, his enemy, is to be banished for ten years only; Norfolk, his friend, for life; but hardly is the sentence pronounced when, in professed compassion for the grief of the aged Gaunt, the King reduces the period of his son's banishment from ten years to six. Bolingbroke is at no pains to conceal his contempt for his cousin's feeble and vacillating conduct:

" How long a time lies in one little word!
Four lagging winters and four wanton springs
End in a word: such is the breath of Kings."

Feeble still is the King's attempt to prevent a combination between the two exiled Dukes against himself. To this end he bids them swear:

" You never shall, so help you truth and God,
Embrace each other's love in banishment;
Nor never look upon each other's face;
Nor never write, request, nor reconcile
This lowing tempest of your home-bred hate;
Nor never by advisèd purpose meet
To plot, contrive, or complot any ill
'Gainst us, our state, our subjects or our land."

His feebleness is plainly matched only by his jealousy and suspicion of his cousin. He had:

" Observ'd his courtship to the common people;
How he did seem to dive into their hearts
With humble and familiar courtesy;
What reverence he did throw away on slaves;

Wooing poor craftsmen with the craft of smiles,
And patient underbearing of his fortune,
As 'twere to banish their affects with him.
Off goes his bonnet to an oyster wench;
A brace of draymen bid God speed him well,
And had the tribute of his supple knee,
With 'Thanks, my countrymen, my loving friends';
As were our England in reversion his,
And he our subjects' next degree in hope."

If the first act reveals Richard's jealousy, his suspiciousness, and feeble vacillation, the second reveals a complementary characteristic—his heartlessness and cruelty. The news of the serious illness of his old uncle, John of Gaunt, seems only to evoke the heartless exclamation:

" Now put it, God, in his physician's mind,
To help him to his grave immediately!
The lining of his coffers shall make coats
To deck our soldiers for these Irish wars.—
Come, gentlemen, let's all go visit him:
Pray God we may make haste, and come too late!"

The Gaunt of the play is, as we have seen, a much mellowed and idealized portrait of the historical personage. From the lips of the dying man comes that superb invocation, which has already been quoted in the introductory chapter. It's concluding passage would, as I have pointed out, be unintelligible but for the incident related in the pre-Shakspearean Richard:

" This land of such dear souls, this dear, dear land,
Dear for her reputation through the world,
Is now leas'd out—I die pronouncing it,—
Like to a tenement or pelting farm :
England, bound in with the triumphant sea,
Whose rocky shore beats back the envious siege
Of watery Neptune, is now bound in with shame,
With inky blots, and rotten parchment bonds :
That England, that was won't to conquer others,
Hath made a shameful conquest of itself."

Hardly is Gaunt's lament ended when Richard arrives, accompanied by the Queen and by the very men in whose favour the shameful transaction had been concluded : Bagot, Bushy, and Green.

Roused by the callous brutality of Richard's enquiry :

" What comfort, man ? How is't with aged Gaunt ?"

the " noble Lancaster " does not spare his reckless spendthrift nephew :

" O, had my grandsire, with a prophet's eye,
Seen how his son's son should destroy his sons,
From forth thy reach he would have laid thy shame,
Deposing thee before thou wert possess'd,
Which art possess'd now to depose thyself.
Why, cousin, wert thou regent of the world,
It were a shame to let this land by lease ;
But for thy world enjoying but this land,
Is it not more than shame to shame it so ?
Landlord of England art thou now, not king :

Thy state of law is bondslave to the law;
And—."

KING RICHARD:

"And thou, a lunatic lean-witted fool,
Presuming on an ague's privilege,
Dar'st with thy frozen admonition
Make pale our cheek, chasing the royal blood
With fury from his native residence.
Now by my seat's right royal majesty,
Wert thou not brother to great Edward's son,
This tongue that runs so roundly in thy head
Should run thy head from thy unreverend shoulders."

Richard's infuriated retort, brutal as it is, is not, we must confess, unprovoked or unintelligible. Nor can we wonder that the news of Gaunt's death is heard without regret. Nevertheless, the confiscation of the Lancastrian inheritance was a gravely impolitic act. Hence York, "the last of noble Edward's sons," is moved, despite his congenital timidity, to protest against a blow which struck at the very root of the rights of property and of primogeniture. Such a blow would assuredly recoil upon the King himself:

"For how art thou a King
But by fair sequence and succession?
Now afore God—God forbid I say true!—
If you do wrongfully seize Hereford's rights,
. . . . . .
You pluck a thousand dangers on your head."

But Richard refuses all advice:

"Think what you will, we seize into our hands
His plate, his goods, his money and his lands."

His protest made, York feebly washes his hands of the whole business:

"I'll not be by the while: my liege, farewell:
What will ensue hereof, there's none can tell."

The character of York; his feeble and vacillating neutrality; his half-hearted attempts to restrain the violence first of one nephew then of the other; his anxiety to do the right thing, and his inability to do it; his almost superstitious acquiescence in fate; his pitiable perplexity when responsibility is thrust upon him—all this seems to me to be indicated with admirable skill.*

Richard, at least, did not question York's fidelity, and, on his departure for Ireland (May 29th, 1399), left his feeble old uncle "lord governor of England." During the King's absence the aristocratic revolt rapidly developed. Northumberland, Ross, and Willoughby were ready for revolt even before Hereford returned from exile. The latter landed at

* In saying this I am not unmindful of Swinburne's criticism, who compares Shakspeare's *Richard II* unfavourably on the whole with Marlowe's *Edward II*, always excepting the one central figure of the piece. He confesses himself quite unable to determine "the main principle, the meaning and the motive of such characters as York, Norfolk and Aumerle," whom he describes as "fitful, shifting, vaporous." (*A Study of Shakespeare*, p. 39.) But is not this precisely the impression which Shakespeare intended to give, at least of York? Coleridge is enthusiastic over the delineation of York, going so far as to declare that "there is scarcely anything in Shakspeare in its degree more admirably drawn than York's character" (p. 169). Gervinus takes a similar view. Cf. *Commentaries*, p. 296 *seq.*

Ravenspur on July 4th, and at once laid claim to the Lancastrian titles and estates. York is overwhelmed by the responsibilities of the situation :

" God for his mercy ! what a tide of woes
Comes rushing on their woful land at once !
. . . . . .
If I
Know how or which way to order these affairs,
Thus thrust disorderly into my hands,
Never believe me."

The Percies and Nevilles at once joined the invader ; York, after reproaching his nephew, declares that, powerless to resist, he will " remain as neuter." Yet he clearly inclines towards the cause of Hereford :

" T' may be I'll go with you ; but yet I'll pause ;
For I am loth to break our country's laws."

And on July 27th he definitely joined him. Bolingbroke, meanwhile, had traversed England by rapid marches ; Bristol surrendered to him before the end of July ; the King's best friends were taken prisoners, and on July 29th Bushy, Green and the Earl of Wiltshire were put to death.

Richard, in the meantime, hastily recalled from Ireland, had landed in North Wales. He returned full of confidence and indeed elation. But nowhere are the essential weaknesses of his character so clearly revealed as in the wonderful scene which follows upon his arrival in Wales. He wastes precious time in a sentimental apostrophe to his native soil :

" I weep for joy,
To stand upon my kingdom once again—
. . . . . .
This earth shall have a feeling, and these stones
Prove armed soldiers, ere her native King
Shall falter under foul rebellion's arms!"

Thomas Merkes, the Bishop of Carlisle, the most honest and most faithful of all Richard's adherents, shrewdly warns the King that, while he is right to trust to supernatural help,

" The means that Heaven yields must be embrac'd
And not neglected; else, if Heaven would,
And we will not, Heaven's offer we refuse."

To Aumerle's protest against further waste of time, Richard replies with a long drawn-out dissertation upon the divine right of kingship, a dissertation which would not have discredited James I:

" Not all the water in the rough rude sea
Can wash the balm from an anointed king;
The breath of worldly men cannot depose
The deputy elected by the Lord."

The immediate moral is not obscure:

" For every man that Bolingbroke hath press'd
To lift shrewd steel against our golden crown,
God for his Richard hath in heavenly pay
A glorious angel; then, if angels fight,
Weak men must fall; for Heaven still guards the right."

Hardly are the words uttered when reports of disaster upon disaster begin to arrive. First, Salisbury comes with the news that :

" All the Welshmen, hearing thou wert dead,
Are gone to Bolingbroke, dispers'd, and fled."

Then Scroop arrives with the news that Bushy, Bagot, Green and the Earl of Wiltshire have " made peace." Richard, mistaking his meaning, flies out in uncontrollable rage :

" O villains, vipers, damn'd without redemption!
Dogs, easily won to fawn on any man!
. . . . . terrible hell make war
Upon their spotted souls for this offence!"

Then, learning the truth, he falls into abject despair :

" . . . . . of comfort no man speak :
Let's talk of graves, of worms, of epitaphs ;
. . . . . .
For God's sake, let us sit upon the ground ;
And tell sad stories of the death of Kings ."

The Bishop makes one more effort to rouse the moody King to action ; but in vain. The news of York's defection adds the last drop to Richard's cup of bitterness :

" What say you now ? What comfort have we now ?
By Heaven, I'll hate him everlastingly
That bids me be of comfort any more.
Go to Flint Castle : there I'll pine away ;
A King, woe's slave, shall kingly woe obey."

To Flint Castle they repair ; and thither, too, come Bolingbroke and his followers. In Richard's attitude towards his triumphant rival there is a characteristic mingling of regal dignity and ill-timed sarcasm and acquiescent senility. The power of words does not fail him ; but words are of small avail :

" O that I were as great
As is my grief, or lesser than my name."

At a moment when fewest words are best, he plays the wanton with his woes, and concludes a long harangue with an unseemly gibe :

" What says King Bolingbroke ? Will his majesty
Give Richard leave to live till Richard die ? "

Bolingbroke, with few words, professes that he comes but to claim his own. Richard's surrender is abject and complete :

" Your own is yours, and I am yours, and all.
. . . . . .

Well you deserve : they well deserve to have
That know the strong'st and surest way to get."

Mounted on a wretched nag, Richard is carried off in custody to London. Before the great scene in Westminster Hall (Act IV, Scene 1), Shakspeare interposes what has been well called " the exquisite and symbolic idyll " of the gardeners. The kingdom is likened to a neglected garden which

" Is full of weeds, her fairest flowers chok'd up,
Her fruit-trees all unprun'd, her hedges ruin'd,
Her knots disorder'd, and her wholesome herbs
Swarming with caterpillars ? "

Nor do these philosophic peasants forbear to point the moral, and to enforce the responsibility of the head-gardener :

" Oh, what a pity is it
That he had not so trimm'd and dress'd his land
As we this garden !

. . . . . .

Had he done so, himself had borne the crown,
Which waste of idle hours hath quite thrown down."

I like to think that from this beautiful scene Mr. Kipling may have drawn inspiration for one of the finest of his poems :

" Our England is a garden, and such gardens are not made
By singing : ' O how beautiful,' and sitting in the shade,
While better men than we go out and start their working lives,
At grubbing weeds from gravel paths with broken dinner knives.'"*

From the gardeners the Queen learns for the first time the fate which has befallen her lord.

The scene as a whole, alike in its simplicity and its

* *The Glory of the Garden.*

symbolism, is a perfect prelude to the splendid pageantry and the superb eloquence which fitly adorn the formal act of desposition. On September 2nd, Richard had been brought to London and lodged in the Tower, and on the 29th he executed a deed of resignation, confessing his unworthiness to reign, and appointed proctors to present his resignation to Parliament. Parliament met on the following day (September 30th), accepted Richard's resignation and then, having heard the articles of accusation read, proceeded to pronounce sentence of deposition on the ground that Richard had proved himself to be "useless, incompetent, altogether insufficient and unworthy." Henry of Lancaster put forward his claim to the crown as the heir "by right line of blood" of Henry III. Parliament assented to the claim, and the two archbishops seated the new King upon the throne. One voice only, that of the fearless Bishop of Carlisle, was raised on Richard's behalf. With rare unanimity the revolution of 1399 had been accomplished.

In his account of the proceedings, thus summarized, Shakspeare has closely followed his authorities; save only in placing Bagot's accusation against Aumerle before, instead of after, the deposition of King Richard, and, of course, in bringing Richard himself upon the stage. Never in his whole career was the most eloquent of Shakspeare's Kings* so eloquent as here, and nowhere is the revelation of his character so complete. His whole mind and thought is concentrated upon his own personal position; his sense of the dramatic requirements

* Walter Pater: *Appreciations.*

of the situation is flawless; he is word-perfect in the part; he does not miss a single point in the "business" appropriate to the scene.

Bolingbroke naively expresses surprise at his exhibition of grief: "I thought you had been willing to resign." Richard's retort is extraordinarily characteristic:

"My crown I am; but still my griefs are mine:
You may my glories and my state depose,
But not my griefs; still am I king of those."

When to Bolingbroke's insistent question:

"Are you contented to resign the crown?"

Richard replies:

"Ay, no;—no, ay; for I must nothing be;
Therefore no no, for I resign to thee."

Bidden to read the articles of deposition, he passes final judgment on himself:

"Mine eyes are full of tears, I cannot see:
And yet salt water blinds them not so much
But they can see a sort of traitors here.
Nay, if I turn mine eyes upon myself,
I find myself a traitor like the rest."

True to the player's instinct he would behold his tear-stained face; and begs that a mirror may be brought. The reflection of his face gives occasion for yet more eloquence; issuing in "business" characteristically melodramatic. Uttering the words:

" A brittle glory shineth in this face :
As brittle as the glory is the face,"

he dashes the mirror to the ground and then, turning to Bolingbroke, silent, unsympathetic, grim :

" Mark, silent King, the moral of this sport,—
How soon my sorrow hath destroy'd my face."

At last Bolingbroke breaks silence with a curt but searching and inexorable comment :

" The shadow of your sorrow hath destroy'd
The shadow of your face."

A great Shakspearean commentator has exactly caught the spirit of this scene : " Life is to Richard a show, a succession of images ; and to put himself into accord with the aesthetic requirements of his position is Richard's first necessity."*

The next scene, Richard's meeting with and farewell to his Queen, is, as I have said, wholly the invention of Shakspeare. It gives Richard further opportunity for sweet-tongued lamentations on his fate :

" I am sworn brother, sweet,
To grim Necessity ; and he and I
Will keep a league till death."

He predicts, too, with singular precision, the trouble in store for his successor.†

* Dowden : *Mind and Art.*

† Cf. *infra.*

The climax of the play had been already reached in Act IV. The discovery of Aumerle's plot against the new King; the revelation of it by his father, Edmund of York,* the passionate pleading of the Duchess for the life of her son; even the murder of King Richard by Sir Pierce Exton in Pomfret Castle are felt to be an anti-climax. The final scene of Richard's murder is preceded by a long soliloquy and by a touching incident supplied by the visit of a groom to his deposed master. But the interest weakens. The drama ends with the deposition of the redeless Richard.

For this and many other reasons, sufficiently obvious, *Richard II* has never had a real hold upon the stage. Abounding in the most exquisite poetry it is not a well constructed drama, and except the name-part, and that of Gaunt, there is not one which an actor, still less an actress, would care to play.

The explanation is, perhaps, furnished in an illuminating passage by Swinburne. All tragic poets, he says, "have been poets before they were tragedians; their lips have had power to sing before their feet had strength to tread the stage, before their hands had skill to paint or carve figures from the life. With Shakspeare it was so as certainly as with Shelley, as evidently as with Hugo."† Critical opinion on the

* Swinburne is particularly severe in his comments on this scene. He would fain ascribe this "misconceived and mis-shapen scene" to another bard. He declares it to be "below the weakest, the rudest, the nastiest scene attributable to Marlowe"; to "be false, wrong, artificial, beyond the worst of his bad and boyish work"; but he too admits that it is Shakspeare's, and must be regarded as "the last hysterical struggle of rhyme to maintain its place in tragedy" (*Op. cit.* pp. 40-41). The scene is not a strong one, but the criticism seems to me to be exaggerated.

† Op. cit. p. 42.

play is more than usually divided. Johnson, with even more of paradox than usual, declares that it "cannot be said much to affect the passions or enlarge the understanding." Coleridge, on the contrary, places it without hesitation "as the first and most admirable of all Shakspeare's purely historical plays." But he is careful to add, "in itself and for the closet." The last words clearly point to the outstanding defect of the play—as a play. It is, in fact, lyrical rather than dramatic; a characteristic which leads Walter Pater to pronounce an enthusiastic eulogy upon it. "With *Romeo and Juliet*," he writes, "*Richard II* belongs to a small group of plays where by happy birth and constant evolution dramatic form approaches to something like the unity of a lyrical ballad, a lyric, a song, a single strain of music."*

None of these judgments would appear, however, to indicate with precision the peculiar interest of a play which to me seems to take rank among the very greatest of Shakspearian tragedies. That interest is partly political and partly psychological.

King John inculcated the supreme necessity of internal unity in the face of menacing danger from without. "Naught shall make us rue, if England to itself do rest but true." The moral which *Richard II* is intended to enforce would seem to be the extreme peril likely to accrue to a State from being ruled by men who are neither irreproachable in personal character, nor carefully trained in the difficult art of statesmanship. High character and an adequate apprenticeship are equally indispensable attributes in a ruler, and equally essential to sound government.

* *Appreciations*, p. 210.

As a King, Richard of Bordeaux is an irreparable failure; and his ruin is plainly ascribed to his own mental and moral degeneration. That degeneration was due to an orphan's upbringing; to the lack of real home influence; to a riotous ill-spent youth; to continued extravagance and perpetual self-indulgence; to an ill-regulated temper and an unbridled tongue; in fine, to complete lack of self-control. Witness the rapid changes of his moods: his ill-grounded confidence; his gushing sentimentality; his abject and contemptible despair. He is not devoid of energy, as we see from the successful *coup d'etat* of 1397; but it is fitfully manifested; never sustained. No one is more quick to appreciate the dramatic situations of kingship; nor does he ever lack becoming words, or fail to strike the appropriate attitude. At moments he comes near to real dignity; but almost invariably everything is spoilt by the intrusion of a touch of theatricality when we look for simplicity; by an obvious pose when we demand, above all else, sincerity. This is indeed his most conspicuous and consistent attribute; he is essentially a *poseur*; he is no true man.

Richard is not only a poseur but a sensualist. Not necessarily in its coarsest form; but he revels in the things of sense. He luxuriates in feeling. He is gluttonous of emotions. He is enamoured of prosperity; but hardly less does he enjoy adversity. Joy and sorrow alike minister to his passion for introspection. He finds food in pleasure and food in grief. He satisfies his own æsthetic criterion. He fascinates himself as he fascinates others.

A poseur; a sensualist; an æsthete; he is also a

dilettante. He is master of no craft. He has had no real discipline; no systematic training in the profession of arms, in the arts of peace, in the mysteries of statecraft. In no school has he graduated. He is by no means wanting in wits; he has picked up the jargon of politics; he can reel off effectively enough the ordinary tags. The King is "the Lord's anointed," the "deputy of Heaven"; "we were not born to sue but to command," and so forth. But though born to command, Richard has never studied, much less mastered, the high and difficult art of ruling. From first to last he is a political amateur.

Is that to be imputed to him for unrighteousness in English eyes? Is that a characteristic with which his own subjects could reasonably reproach him? Has there not always been, among Englishmen, a curious mistrust of the expert and the professional? More particularly in the art of Politics? It has been generally assumed that such is the case; and the disposition of high offices of State has certainly afforded some ground for the assumption.

That, however, is not precisely the conclusion of one of the most discerning critics of English Political Institutions. President Lowell believes that he has discovered the secret of the success of English government in the invariable association of the expert and of the layman; the permanent official and the "man of the world."*

Is Dr. Lowell right? Is the success of English administration due to the association of amateur and professional? Are we wise in conferring at least a semblance of power upon the amateur? Is it safe to

* *The Government of England*, by A. L. Lowell, vol. I, ch. viii.

trust—as we largely do—to brilliant improvisation? These are large and difficult questions which cannot be answered here and now.

All the great critics, from Coleridge downwards, have extolled *Richard II* for its political wisdom. It well deserves their eulogies. But it is not without significance that it should have been left to a German critic (*Kreyssig*) to drop the hint which I have attempted to develope. The Germans have no use for the amateur—in peace or war. They trust exclusively to the trained and disciplined expert. Our way is different. Whether, in a world dominated more and more by exact science, it is wise to adhere to it, is too large a question upon which to embark.

Most people, however, will read and re-read *Richard II* less for the political moral it enshrines than for the supreme subtlety and skill with which Shakspeare has drawn the character of the unhappy King. The reputation of the redeless Richard has suffered at the hands alike of contemporary chroniclers and of the modern school of scientific historians. The former had nothing to gain by eulogising a fallen monarch; the latter are apt to judge harshly a King who stood for a discredited principle of government. The champion of autocracy is as little likely to get credit from the historian of successful democracy as was the last of the Plantagenets from a Lancastrian chronicler. But in truth no one has judged Richard of Bordeaux so severely, so inexorably as he judged himself:

> "Nay, if I turn mine eyes upon myself,
> I find myself a traitor like the rest."

It is the essence of Shakspearian tragedy that the citadel should be betrayed from within. The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune may rain upon the outer battlements; external assault may issue in catastrophe; but a catastrophe becomes a tragedy only when the external assailant can count upon a traitor within the walls. *Richard II* does not lack this essential element of tragedy: the hapless King was his own worst enemy. He confesses it frankly. Nurtured in the habit of introspection; pitilessly precise in self-analysis, Richard II did not shrink from exposing his own weakness. His nature, indeed, demanded an audience. The world must be admitted to his confidence. His life had been played on an ample stage. Whatever the cost, the final exit must be effective.

CHAPTER IV

"THE UNQUIET TIME OF KING HENRY THE FOURTH"—THE "VILE POLITICIAN BOLINGBROKE"

"God knows, my son,
By what bye-paths and indirect crook'd ways
I met this Crown; and I myself know well
How troublesome it sat upon my head."
HENRY IV.

"There is scarcely one in the whole line of our Kings of whose personality it is so difficult to get a definite idea. . . He seems to us a man whose life was embittered by the knowledge that he had taken on himself a task for which he was unequal, whose conscience, ill-informed as it may have been, had soured him, and who felt that the judgments of men at least would deal hardly with him when he was dead."—BISHOP STUBBS.

RICHARD II contains some of the most interesting and exquisite work that ever proceeded from the pen of Shakspeare. But it is the pen of one who, as a playwright, was still relatively in his novitiate. *Henry IV*, on the contrary, was written at the meridian of Shakspeare's powers. With *Henry V* it belongs to that middle period when by general consent the poet-dramatist produced his

most perfect work. It is in that period, as one of the greatest of the Victorian poets has said, that " the language of Shakspeare is most limpid in its fulness, the style most pure, the thought most transparent through the close and luminous raiment of perfect expression. The conceits and crudities of the first stage are outgrown and cast aside, the harshness and obscurity which at times may strike us as among the notes of his third manner have as yet no place in the flawless work of this second stage. That which has to be said is not yet too great for perfection of utterance; passion has not yet grappled with thought in so close and fierce an embrace as to strain and rend the garment of words, though stronger and subtler, than ever was woven of human speech."* To this middle period belong four of the greatest comedies: *The Merchant of Venice*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *As You Like It*, and *Twelfth Night*, not to mention *The Taming of the Shrew* and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. The latter was written in a fortnight and, according to authentic tradition, at the bidding of Queen Elizabeth, who desired to see Sir John Falstaff in love. To the same period belong also the greatest of the Roman " Histories," the greatest of the Tragedies, and the three greatest of the English Chronicle Plays.

Both parts of *Henry IV* were written in the year 1597-98; Part I is entered in the *Stationers' Register* under date February 25th, 1598; while in Ben Jonson's *Every Man in his Humour* (1599) there is a clear reference to Part II.

The outline of the historical facts, including one

* Swinburne: *Op. cit.* pp. 66-67.

or two unimportant errors of detail, is taken from Holinshed; but Shakspeare also made free use of a well-known play, published it would seem in 1594, *The Famous Victories of Henry V.** To Shakspeare's supreme skill as an adapter reference has already been made and there is no critical question connected with the date or sources of *Henry IV* which need detain us.

Historically, the two parts of *Henry IV* stand in the closest possible relation with *Richard II.* Together with *Henry V* they may be said to form the tetralogy of the Lancastrian Revolution of 1399. In some senses, indeed, the whole series constitutes a single drama broken up into parts for convenience of representation.

An alert spectator, still more an attentive reader, would already have noted in *Richard II* clear indications of the keynotes which are to be struck in *Henry IV.* The first is the oligarchical movement among the great barons to which reference has already been made. King Richard had shrewdly predicted that his successor would find himself confronted by the same aristocratic intrigues which led to his own undoing:

" Northumberland, thou ladder wherewithal
The mounting Bolingbroke ascends my throne,
The time shall not be many hours of age
More than it is, ere foul sin, gathering head,
Shall break into corruption: thou shalt think,
Though he divide the realm, and give thee half,

* This older play will be found in Hazlitt's *Shakspeare's Library*, Part II, Vol. I.

It is too little, helping him to all ;
And he shall think, that thou, which know'st the way
To plant unrightful Kings, wilt know again,
Being ne'er so little urg'd, another way
To pluck him headlong from the usurped throne.
The love of wicked friends converts to fear ;
That fear to hate ; and hate turns one or both
To worthy danger and deserved death."

The fearless Bishop of Carlisle had not failed to warn Bolingbroke of the consequences certain to ensue upon an act of usurpation. Dynastic quarrels would infallibly result in civil war :

" Peace shall go sleep with Turks and infidels,
And in this seat of peace tumultuous wars,
Shall kin with kin, and kind with kind confound."

The House of Lancaster would in its turn succumb to a movement precisely parallel with that which had brought it to the throne ; Percy would find a counterpart in Warwick the King-maker ; the land which spurned the absolutism of a Richard to-day would groan under the pitiable weakness of a Henry VI to-morrow, and Yorkist would supplant Lancastrian, as Lancastrian had pushed aside Plantagenet.

Nor is the psychological interest less continuous than the political. Already in *Richard II* we have had a hint of the development likely to take place in the character of the young Prince Hal. Even his father, Hereford, petulantly and impatiently as he enquires about his proceedings and whereabouts, can still perceive " some sparkles of a better hope " :

" Can no man tell of my unthrifty son ?
'Tis full three months since I did see him last :—
If any plague hang over us, 'tis he.

. . . . . .

As dissolute as desperate : yet through both
I see some sparkles of a bitter hope,
Which elder days may happily bring forth."

How that hope was fulfilled the two parts of *Henry IV* and *Henry V* are designed to show.

The action of *Henry IV*, Part I, extends from the year 1402 down to the battle of Shrewsbury (July 21st, 1403), a period of ten or twelve months. Part II extends over ten years from 1403 down to the King's death in 1413.

When the first Part opens the revolution of 1399, which had brought Henry of Lancaster to the throne, was an accomplished fact. Nay more ; Henry was already deeply involved in the difficulties, personal and political, which were destined to beset his path to the end of his life's journey. Those difficulties were in part the direct outcome of Henry's own character and position ; but they arose much more out of the peculiar features of the revolution which had brought him to the throne.

Contemporaries, indeed, regarded Henry Bolingbroke's success as due much less to his own merits than to the demerits of his rival. Thus the chronicler Hardyng wrote :

" Kynge Henry was admytte
Unto the croune of Englande, that did amounte
Not for desert nor yet for any witte,

Or might of him selfe in otherwyse yet,
But only for the castigation
Of king Richardes wicked perversacion,
Of which the realme then yrked everychone
And full glad were of his deposicion,
And glad to croune kyng Henry so anone,
With all theyr hertes and whole affeccion
For hatred more of kyng Richardes defection
Then for the love of kyng Henry that daye :
So chaunged then the people on hym aye."*

Of Henry's own character and personality it is extraordinarily difficult to get a clear impression. So long as he was in opposition he evoked something like enthusiasm ; from the moment he came into power he had to contend, it would seem, with an ever deepening unpopularity. Against his private character no word has ever been breathed. "Throughout his career," writes Bishop Stubbs, "he is consistently devout, pure in life, temperate and careful to avoid offence, faithful to the Church and clergy, unwavering in orthodoxy, keeping always before his eyes to the design with which he began his active life, hoping to die as a crusader."† "Painstaking and industrious ; merciful, temperate, and domestic ; a traveller, but not a soldier or sportsman ; without any distinguished taste for literature or art ; Henry's character and talents were those of a good official. Yet his achievements were not inconsiderable." Such is Sir James Ramsay's admirable summary.‡

"His character," writes Sanford, "seems to have been at the bottom cold and unsympathetic and as

* Hardyng, p. 409. † *Constitutional History* III, 8.
‡ *Lancaster and York*, I, 142.

devoid of generous impulses as it was naturally free from sinister motives. . . His wariness became suspicion, and his caution degenerated into dissimulation."*

Such a character is not calculated to evoke enthusiasm ; but the rapidly waning popularity of Henry IV as King was due less to his own personality, than to the peculiarities of the situation in which he was placed, and, in particular, to the character of the Lancastrian revolution.

Henry's position cannot be understood unless it is realised that he was at once a usurper and a Conservative. He did indeed put forward a claim by right of descent, but few people really believed in the validity of the title thus preferred. They had acquiesced in his usurpation ; they had indeed welcomed it as the only means by which a dangerous and incompetent King could be pushed aside ; yet a usurpation it remained ; and the usurper had to justify the usurpation by results.

Henry IV, however, was not only a usurper but a Conservative ; carried into power on the crest of the wave of a conservative reaction. During the second half of the fourteenth century England had been threatened with revolution from many sides. The great plague of 1349 had violently dislocated a social system which rested upon the manorial organization. That organization was already showing signs of modification, if not of dissolution, before the crisis of 1349. A system of copyhold tenure was gradually superseding the cruder relation between feudal lord and villein-tenant ; the lord was looking to free

* *Estimates of English Kings.*

labour, instead of villein service, for the cultivation of his demesne, and the villein, if not yet personally "free," was rapidly attaining to a position of agricultural independence. The process of evolution was arrested by the Black Death. Labour was scarce; land went out of cultivation; the lords attempted to restore the *status quo ante*, and the attempt was one of the many causes which contributed to the peasant rising of 1381.

The more extreme among the followers of John Wyclif contributed another element to a movement which threatened the kingdom with a social revolution. An ecclesiastical revolution was portended by the teaching of Wyclif himself, more particularly in the last few years of his life. Towards the latter movement, if not towards the former, Richard II was believed to be sympathetic. His marriage with a Bohemian princess gave additional colour to the suspicion.

Whether that suspicion was well grounded or no, there can be no question that in a third revolutionary movement Richard was himself the prime leader. The *coup d' état* of 1397-8 was, as we saw in the last chapter, a deliberate attempt to arrest the evolution of parliamentary government. The motives of the *Lords Appellant* may have been oligarchic rather than democratic; but those of the King were frankly autocratic. Temporarily, and perhaps accidentally, the *Appellants* stood for the principle of a monarchy limited and controlled by Parliament; Richard stood for the principle of naked absolutism. The revolution of 1399 was an attempt, and a successful attempt, to maintain "constitutional" doctrine.

Archbishop Arundel was at special pains to emphasize this aspect of the Revolution. The new *régime* was to be strictly "constitutional." "God," said the Archbishop in his allocution to Henry's first Parliament, "had sent a man knowing and discreet for governance who, by the aid of God, would be governed and counselled by the wise and ancient of the realm." The new King undertook to conduct the government of the realm, not by his own "voluntary purpose or singular opinion, but by common advice, counsel and consent."

That Henry IV was sincerely anxious to fulfil, not in letter only but in spirit, the pledge given on his behalf by the Archbishop there is no reason whatever to doubt. But there is another and not less important aspect of the successful movement of 1399. Henry of Lancaster came to the throne not only as the representative of the possessioned classes threatened by the communistic teaching of John Ball and others; not only as the defender of ecclesiastical orthodoxy threatened by John Wyclif; not only as the champion of constitutionalism, flouted by Richard of Bordeaux; but most of all as the nominee of that baronial oligarchy which for the last two hundred years had been in open antagonism to the Crown. Henry IV was the political heir not of Simon de Montfort or Edward I, but of the Charter lords of 1215; of the men who had imposed the Provisions of Oxford upon Henry III, and the *Confirmatio Cartarum* upon Edward I; of Thomas of Lancaster and the Lords Ordainers; of Bolingbroke's father, John of Gaunt; of his uncle, Thomas of Woodstock, and of the *Lords Appellant*. The relation

of Henry IV to the oligarchical movement of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, his indebtedness to great baronial houses, like that of Percy, are all important in supplying the key to the fourteen years of his troubled reign.

The situation was not wholly unlike that in which Louis Philippe found himself after the July revolution of 1830 in France. It is even more closely paralleled by that which ensued upon the Revolution of 1688 in England. Neither the Revolution of 1399 nor that of 1688 was in strictness a "popular" movement—a movement proceeding from the people. In each case the people acquiesced in a fact accomplished by a small group of barons and notables. In each case the men who put their nominee upon the throne looked for the appropriate reward. In each case they were disappointed. It could not be otherwise.

Richard had shrewdly foretold it:

> "Thou shalt think
> Though he divide the realm and give thee half,
> It is too little helping him to all."

Worcester, the least admirable of the Percies, is, in *Henry IV*, the loudest in his complaints of the King's ingratitude:

> "Our house, my Sovereign liege, little deserves
> The scourge of greatness to be used on it;
> And that same greatness, too, which our own hands
> Have holp to make so portly."
>
> (I, 3.)

And again, later, when the rebellion had gained head, and his own treachery had been discovered, Worcester breaks out :

" It pleas'd your majesty to turn your looks,
Of favour from myself and all our house ;
And yet I must remember you, my lord,
We were the first and dearest of your friends.

It was myself, my brother and his son,
That brought you home . . . . . .
And, being fed by us, you us'd us so
As that ungentle gull, the cuckoo's bird,
Useth the sparrow,—did oppress our nest,
Grew by our feeding to so great a bulk,
That even our love durst not come near your sight,
For fear of swallowing." (V, 1.)

It is ever thus in political life. If there is one thing more certain to cause estrangement between friends than to receive a favour, it is to confer one. The Whigs, who had brought the Dutch Stadtholder to England were necessarily disappointed when the King made it clear that he had no intention of giving them a monopoly of political favours. It was just the same with the aristocratic leaders of the Revolution of 1399 and their nominee.

The barons who had crowned Henry of Lancaster could not forget that he was but lately their colleague, nor could they forgive his apparent ingratitude for the supreme favour received at their hands. On his part, Henry IV could never be unconscious of the debt he had incurred, nor quite unsuspicious of the men to whom he owed it.

There were other difficulties and dangers to be

confronted by the Lancastrian King. Archbishop Arundel had pledged him to the trial of a political experiment, for which the nation as a whole was not ready. Parliament was to become for awhile not merely a legislative and taxative organ, but the direct instrument of government. The experiment, though supremely interesting to the student of political science, was premature, and under Henry's grandson, it issued in disastrous failure. Henry IV was however, not only pledged to a constitutional *régime*; he was the champion of ecclesiastical orthodoxy, and thus became involved in the persecution of the Lollards. Hitherto the English Church had been singularly free alike from "heresy" and from persecution. The attempt to prosecute Wyclif for heresy in 1379 was a complete fiasco; a Statute against heresy was, however, passed in 1382, and a considerable number of people were prosecuted under it. But the proceedings were highly distasteful to laymen; the Knights of the Shire intervened; the persecuting Statute was repealed, and prosecutions ceased.

The revolution of 1399, however, gave the extreme party their chance, and they seized it with avidity. A certain Lollard priest, William Sawtre, was brought before the Bishops in Convocation, was condemned, and by royal writ executed; and in 1402 the famous statute *De Haeretico Comburendo* was passed. But Arundel's policy provoked retaliation. In 1410 the Knights of the Shire not only petitioned for an amendment of the Statute of 1402, but introduced a Bill for the partial disendowment of the Church.

Of this Bill we shall hear more, in the next reign, when we seek for the causes of the war undertaken by Henry V against France. For the moment it must suffice to notice that it constituted one among other causes which contributed to render the reign of Henry IV " unquiet."

To the anti-Lollard legislation there is no allusion in Shakspeare, unless, indeed, we may regard the renaming of Sir John Oldcastle as a silent tribute to the memory of a conspicuous and honourable Lollard. Any such allusion would have betrayed a lack of tact in a play designed to please an Elizabethan audience. But there was a positive as well as a negative reason for the omission.

Shakspeare obviously desired to concentrate attention upon another aspect of the reign: upon the relations between the " usurping " King and the men who had aided the usurpation. On the political morality of the transaction he pronounces no explicit judgment. He does not commit himself to a specific view as to the legal descent of the Crown. Whether Henry of Lancaster's " usurpation " were justified or not, he would have need of all his state-craft to overcome the difficulties inherent in the situation: to satisfy the conservative instincts of the men who had abetted usurpation; to concede the claims of the orthodox ecclesiastics without outraging the Lollard sympathies of the House of Commons; to accept the principle of parliamentary control without fatally weakening the executive power; to repress aristocratic disorder and at the same time retain the friendship of the baronial oligarchy to

which he owed so much. Such was the task to which Henry of Lancaster was called.

The first line of the play reveals the effect already produced by the effort to perform it upon the King himself:

"So stricken as we are, so wan with care."

Nevertheless, Henry is bent upon fulfilling forthwith his pledge to undertake a crusade. But it cannot be. From the Welsh border comes the news that Owen Glendower, the Welsh chieftain, had inflicted a crushing defeat upon the force despatched, under Mortimer, to reduce him to obedience, and that Mortimer was a prisoner in his hands. The Mortimer thus captured by Glendower was in reality Sir Edmund Mortimer, younger brother of the late Roger, Earl of March, grandson of Lionel, Duke of Clarence, in the female line who had been declared heir to the throne by Richard II. Shakspeare, however, here and throughout the play, is misled by Holinshed into a confusion between the uncle, Sir Edmund Mortimer, and his nephew, Edmund, Earl of March, who at this time was only a boy of eight.

Bad news, too, has come from Scotland; that Hotspur had been defeated by Douglas. But the first news was false. Hotspur, in command of the King's troops, had won a gallant victory at Holmedon, or Homildon (14th September, 1402); 10,000 Scots were slain, and many of their proudest nobles were prisoners. Yet there was a fly in the amber. The Percy, so the report ran, had refused to deliver his prisoners, Archibald, Earl of Douglas, and the Earl of Fife, up to the King. Summoned to

the King's presence, Hotspur warmly denied the charge. But the accusation served to accentuate differences already tending to become acute. The King is plainly jealous of Harry Percy:

> " Who is the theme of honour's tongue;
> Amongst a grove, the very straightest plant;
> Who is sweet Fortune's minion and her pride."

The jealousy is enhanced by the contrast between the valiant deeds and high repute of Percy and the follies of the young Prince Hal:

> " Whilst I, by looking on the praise of him,
> See riot and dishonour stain the brow
> Of my young Harry."

To heighten the contrast, Hotspur is represented by Shakspeare as the contemporary of the Prince, whereas he was in reality rather senior to the King himself.

A further cause of quarrel was supplied by the King's refusal to ransom Hotspur's brother-in-law, Sir Edmund Mortimer. Mortimer, captured as we saw by Glendower, had subsequently married the daughter of his captor. The King, highly incensed by the marriage, hotly accused Mortimer of treachery, declaring that the " foolish Mortimer " had

> " wilfully betray'd
> The lives of those that he did lead to fight
> Against the great magician, damn'd Glendower,
> . . . . . .

Shall our coffers, then,
Be emptied to redeem a traitor home?
Shall we buy treason?"

The accusation, groundless and malevolent, rouses Hotspur to frenzy; he blames himself, his father, and his uncle that they had combined,

"To put down Richard, that sweet, lovely rose,
And plant this thorn, this canker, Bolingbroke."

When his father chides him for breaking "into this woman's mood," he admits the impeachment, but pleads justification:

"Why, look you, I am whipp'd and scourg'd with rods,
Nettled, and stung with pismires, when I hear
Of this vile politician, Bolingbroke."

The contrast between these two men, Hotspur and Bolingbroke, sharp in historic fact, is sharpened for dramatic purposes by Shakspeare. Both characters are superbly drawn: Bolingbroke, the shrewd politician, the crafty diplomatist; Hotspur, the blunt impetuous, and hot-tempered soldier; courageous and generous to a fault; transparently honest, guileless and sincere. Between Hotspur and Bolingbroke there was nothing, save physical courage, in common, and very little between Hotspur and Prince Hal. The latter, indeed, speaks of him with careless contempt: "I am not yet of Percy's mind, the Hotspur of the North; he that kills me some six or seven dozen of Scots at a breakfast, washes his hands and says to his wife: 'Fie upon this quiet life, I want work.'"

Perfectly consistent with the general lines of Hotspur's character as drawn by Shakspeare, and entirely charming in itself, is the one glimpse we get of Hotspur's relations with his wife. Of Lady Percy we know nothing from history but her name, Elizabeth Mortimer, and Shakspeare, transforming her name into his favourite Kate, uses her only as an exquisite foil to her restless husband. The scene between them is as delicate comedy as anything to be found in Jane Austen herself.

" What say'st thou, Kate ? what would'st thou have with me ?

LADY :

" Do you not love me ? do you not, indeed ?
Well, do not, then ; for since you love me not,
I will not love myself. Do you not love me ?
Nay, tell me if you speak in jest or no ?

HOTSPUR :

" Come, wilt thou see me ride ?
And when I am o' horseback, I will swear
I love thee infinitely. But hark you, Kate ;
I must not have you henceforth question me
Whither I go, nor reason whereabout :

. . . . . .

This evening must I leave you, gentle Kate.
I know you wise ; but yet no further wise
Than Harry Percy's wife : constant you are ;
But yet a woman : and for secrecy,
No lady closer ; for I well believe
Thou wilt not utter what thou dost not know,—
And so far will I trust thee, gentle Kate."

This scene is the prelude to the outbreak of the Percy rebellion, and in Act III we have the principal conspirators in conference at Bangor: Mortimer, Glendower, "Uncle Worcester," and Hotspur himself. A partition treaty had been concluded between Mortimer, the Percies, and Glendower, by which the latter was to get the whole of Wales, together with Shropshire, Cheshire, and part of Staffordshire. As to the details there was considerable dispute, a dispute which brings out the contrast between Hotspur and Glendower — the typical Welshman, vain, voluble, superstitious, and unreliable. For the tradition that connected Glendower with supernatural portents Shakspeare had the authority of Holinshed, who himself relied upon contemporary writers. Writing of the expedition undertaken by Henry against Glendower in 1400 Holinshed remarks: "Owen conveyed himself out of the way into his known lurking places, and, as was thought, through art magic he caused such foul weather of winds, tempests, rain, snow, and hail to be raised, for the annoyance of the King's army, that the King was constrained to return home, having caused his people yet to spoil and burn first a great part of the country." That Henry's operations were gravely hampered by the climatic conditions, the snowdrifts and storms of the Snowdon district is undeniable; that these conditions were produced by the magic arts of Glendower was an inference which found ready credence among contemporaries.

Nor was Shakspeare's Glendower at all concerned to deny the reputation thus acquired. His was no ordinary nativity:

" At my nativity the front of heaven
Was full of fiery shapes, of burning cressets ;
And at my birth the frame and huge foundations
Of the earth shak'd like a coward."

Again Shakspeare can justify himself from Holinshed :

" Strange wonders happened, as men reported, at the nativity of this man, for the same night he was born all his father's horses in the stable were found to stand in blood up to their bellies."

Nor did the portents attending his nativity lack justification in the accomplishments of his maturity :

" I can call spirits from the vasty deep."

Not less characteristic is Hotspur's contemptuous rejoinder :

" Why, so can I, or so can any man ;
But will they come, when you do call for them ? "

As for the portents of his birth, they would equally have happened :

" If your mother's cat
Had kittened, though yourself had ne'er been born."

His literary and musical accomplishments are little to the liking of the prosaic Percy :

" I had rather be a kitten and cry mew
Than one of these same ballad-mongers.
. . . . . O, he's as tedious
As is a tired horse, or a railing wife ;
Worse than a smoky house."

Still, Glendower is a valiant warrior and a " worthy gentleman," and Percy's peevish mood must needs yield to his good humour.

Before the solidity of the alliance is brought to the test at Shrewsbury, Shakspeare interposes the famous interview between the King and the Prince of Wales. For this scene (Act III, Scene 2) there would seem to be no historical warrant. The Prince had already taken the field against the rebels. Still less was there any justification for the reproaches showered by the King upon a lad who, though only fifteen, had already won high distinction as a soldier. But the scene gives the father the opportunity for an essay upon the arts of the political aspirant, and at the same time gives the son the chance of graceful submission to his father's will. Quite natural is it that, stung by his father's undeserved reproaches, and still more by the unfavourable contrast between himself and Harry Percy, he should burst forth :

" I will redeem all this on Percy's head,
. . . . . for the time will come
That I shall make this northern youth exchange
His glorious deeds for my indignities."

The next words, however, seem to betray a calculation which ill befits the boy of fifteen :

" Percy is but my factor, good my lord,
To engross up glorious deeds on my behalf."

The words were to be made good at Shrewsbury, but for the moment the scene is interrupted by the

hasty arrival of Sir Walter Blunt with the news that the rebel forces under Douglas and the Percies were gathering at Shrewsbury. The King had already been apprised of this—" For this advertisement is five days old " — and had already made his dispositions. The Earl of Westmoreland, and with him Prince John of Lancaster, had already started for the scene of action ; the Prince of Wales was to start in a day or two, and the King himself a day later.

The Fifth Act takes us to Shrewsbury. The account of the battle itself is prefaced by a detailed exposition of the case against Henry of Lancaster, set forth by Hotspur and Worcester. The points are familiar : Henry, professing that he had returned from exile merely to claim the Lancastrian inheritance, had deposed and murdered Richard ; he had refused to ransom Mortimer, and had behaved with gross ingratitude towards the Percies. In this indictment Shakspeare closely follows his authorities, but many of the incidents of the battle itself—notably the defeat and death of Hotspur, in single combat, by the Prince of Wales—are Shakspeare's own invention. With the dispersal of the rebel forces at Shrewsbury, the First Part ends.

But *Henry IV* is not a mere " Chronicle Play," a study in political philosophy. With history of a high order it combines some of the finest comedy in the English tongue. This combination is in itself remarkable from the point of view of the evolution of the Chronicle Play. It was, indeed, anticipated to some small extent in *King John* ; we shall find it again attempted, though less happily and less effectively, in *Henry IV*, Part II, and in *Henry V* ; but by

common consent the combination reaches the climax of effectiveness in the First Part of *Henry IV*. Here we get wrought into the texture of facts and persons derived from the chronicles, scenes and characters which are wholly the invention of the poet. Among these characters, Falstaff, of course, stands forth pre-eminent, and by him the comedy scenes are entirely dominated.

Unlike Faulconbridge, Falstaff is no mere adaptation ; he is a creation, and one of the greatest in all literature. It was said of Charles Dickens that " he loved all the children of his fancy, but like most fond parents, he had in his heart of hearts a favourite child, and his name is David Copperfield." Sir John, I suspect, stood in the same relation to Shakspeare. One of the most acute of Shakspeare's critics goes, indeed, so far as to suggest that ' Shakspeare was carried off his balance by his own creation, with the result that the reader also finds irresistible the attraction of the fat old Knight.'

Is this a true and sufficient explanation of an undeniable fact ? That question cannot be dogmatically answered, for, of a truth, Falstaff is the despair of every Shakspearian commentator. " Falstaff, uninitiated and inimitable, Falstaff ! How shall I describe thee ? " Dr. Johnson's difficulty has never yet found a satisfactory solution. The concern of the present writer is not with the comedy but with the history of these Chronicle Plays. Yet who that ever came within a mile of Sir John but desired more intimate acquaintance ? Who—save a cool and calculating Lancastrian—can resist the attraction of the fat old man ? Who does not long to probe the secret of the spell which

Falstaff laid upon all who came within the orbit of his influence?

The ambition is only whetted by the extraordinary difficulty of the task. The superficial impression conveyed by Falstaff, more particularly by the conventional Falstaff of the acted drama, is that of a coarse-minded, pot-bellied old man who defiles the white hairs which should be the glory of age by persistent indulgence in the follies and vices of youth. And who can say that the first impression is false? Never was a hoary-headed sinner more obviously unrepentant. Lewd of tongue, a profligate, a deep drinker, a glutton, a liar, a braggart, a thief, a lover of low company, the boon companion of loose women, of serving-men and tapsters—Falstaff is all this; but he is something more. The superficial impression, though not inaccurate, is plainly inadequate. Must cowardice be added to the list of his defects? An ingenious essayist of the eighteenth century has devoted many ponderous pages to an elaborate examination of this charge.* That Falstaff allowed himself to be placed in situations which, in the case of a lesser man, would have secured a conviction on the charge of cowardice is undeniable; but Maurice Morgan contends, and with no small measure of success, that the real and dominating motive which inspired Falstaff, even in equivocal situations, was not moral or physical cowardice, but, on the one hand, an exaggerated common sense, and, on the other, an overmastering sense of humour.

* Cf. Maurice Morgan: *Essay on the Dramatic Character of Sir John Falstaff* (1777) reprinted in *Eighteenth Century Essays on Shakspeare* (ed. D. Nichol Smith).

Will the apology bear a close scrutiny? Falstaff did not lack candour in self-analysis. What says he of himself? To excess of valour he makes no claim. "Indeed I am not John of Gaunt, your grandfather, but yet no coward, Hal." Did he not feign death to save his life at Shrewsbury? And why not forsooth? That the life was not worthless is attested by the obituary lament of the Prince, and to Falstaff it seemed a much better jest to save his life by a stratagem, at once legitimate and humourous, than to sacrifice it to no purpose. And what rational person will blame him? As for the flight from the assault of Prince Hal and Poins at Gadshill, we have his own humourous explanation that he was "a coward upon instinct." We are wont to treat the explanation as in itself an elaborate jest: but amid the humourous chaff was there not a grain of seriousness? Even Poins, with all his malice against Falstaff, is compelled to differentiate between him and his companions. "For two of them, speaking, we may suppose of Bardolph and Peto, "I know them to be as true bred cowards as ever turned back; and for the third, if he fight longer than he sees cause I will forswear arms." That by the "third," Falstaff is indicated I cannot doubt; for the description is precisely accurate. Falstaff was no coward, but the measure of his valour was strictly limited by his rationalistic discretion.

That Falstaff was a profligate, a liar, and the rest of it cannot be denied. And yet through all his vicious and evil life we cannot but feel that he manages to preserve something of the instinct of a gentleman. His lies are indeed palpable, but can anyone pretend

that they are meant seriously to deceive? Compare the robbery at Gadshill with the successful fraud of the modern company promoter. The one has nothing whatever to redeem it; it is inspired by sheer lust of gain, whatever the suffering and loss it may involve to others, and it is marked by long and crafty premeditation. The other is primarily the outcome of ebullient spirits, a love of adventure and sport. Falstaff's rascally associates feel and acknowledge the subtle power of breeding and blood. Not even the Prince himself inspires them with quite the same measure of respect. "They tell me flatly," says Prince Hal, "I am no proud Jack like Falstaff." "Proud Jack" extorted the deference, if not the respect of all with whom he came into contact. To his intimates he permits a certain degree of familiarity; to them he is "Jack Falstaff," but he is "Sir John with the rest of Europe," as he himself insists, and with all, he is "proud Jack."

With the travesty of the true Sir John presented in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* we are not here concerned. There is good reason to believe that that delightful farce was written at white heat by Shakspeare in deference to the orders of Queen Elizabeth, who wanted to see "Falstaff in love." But the result was a mere caricature of the original Knight and the attentive reader of the two Parts of *Henry IV* will find it difficult to resist the conclusions suggested above; and they are in harmony with all that Shakspeare reveals as to the origin and early life of the fat old man. He is clearly represented as of gentle birth; he had enjoyed the customary education of a gentleman; he had been a page in the

household of Thomas Mowbray, Duke of Norfolk, in itself a patent of gentility ; he became a soldier of repute ; his knighthood was earned by valour in the field, and his services were further acknowledged by the grant of a pension. What element of respectability would he have lacked had he been endowed with even a spice of prudence and had he not been cursed with an exuberant and overpowering sense of humour ? And what would the world have lost if he had not been cursed with it ?

The man is absolutely devoid of malice ; even his vices are humourously exaggerated by himself. So far from paying a compliment to virtue by pretending to be better than he is, the pretence is much worse than the reality. "He seems," as Maurice Morgan truly says, "to have set by degrees, all sober reputation at defiance ; and finding eternal resources in his wit, he borrows, shifts, defrauds, and even robs, without dishonour. Laughter and approbation attend his greatest excesses ; and, being governed visibly by no settled bad principle or ill design, fun and humour account for and cover all. By degrees, however, and through indulgence, he acquires bad habits, becomes a humourist, grows enormously corpulent, and falls into the infirmities of age ; yet never quits, all the time, one single levity or vice of youth, or loses any of that cheerfulness of mind which had enabled him to pass through this course with ease to himself and delight to others ; and thus, at last, mixing youth and age, enterprize and corpulency, wit and folly, poverty and expense, title and buffoonery ; innocence as to purpose, and wickedness as to practice ; neither incurring hatred by bad

principle, nor contempt by cowardice ; yet involved in circumstances productive of imputation in both ; a butt and a wit, a humourist and a man of humour, a touchstone and a laughing stock, a jester and a jest, has Sir John Falstaff, taken at that period of his life in which we see him, become the most perfect comic character that perhaps ever was exhibited."*

Yet, true as this is, it is hardly sufficient to explain the extraordinary fascination which Falstaff contrives to exercise alike over his companions and over us. Coleridge seems to go, as in Shakspearian criticism he generally does, to the root of the matter when he writes : " He was a man of such pre-eminent abilities as to give him a profound contempt for all those by whom he was usually surrounded." It is, I believe, by right of sheer intellectual superiority that Falstaff maintained and maintains his ascendancy. It is not for his rascality that we like him ; it is for his rare wit, his superb self-possession and his all-round intellectual agility. He is always sure of himself ; he is never really taken at a disadvantage. Hence the intellectual pleasure with which we watch his verbal fence and the consummate skill by which he extricates himself, time after time, from an impossible situation.

Such is the man by whom the comedy scenes in *Henry IV* are mostly sustained. On Prince Hal's part in these scenes I shall have to enlarge later on. It is time to resume the historical sequence of events. Part I ended, as we saw, with Hotspur's death and Prince Hal's victory at Shrewsbury. Part II summarizes the story of the last ten years of the reign of

* *Op. cit.* p. 227.

Henry IV (1403-1413). The form is identical with that of Part I; we have the same regular alternations of History and Comedy; but, on the whole, notwithstanding many passages of rare, and indeed unsurpassed poetic beauty, the play is less interesting than Part I, and the characters are on a lower plane of excellence.

The development of the Percy rebellion supplies the main thread of the narrative throughout the first four Acts. That rebellion had been scotched, but not killed, at the battle of Shrewsbury. Hotspur, indeed, had fallen on the field, and the Earl of Worcester, Sir Richard Venables, and Sir Richard Vernon, of Shipbroke, who were among the prisoners, were summarily tried (July 23rd) and executed. The Earl of Douglas—" that furious Scot "—was severely wounded and taken prisoner; but, not being a subject, he was kept in honourable captivity.

Glendower, in alliance with the Orleanist party in France, maintained the struggle in Wales throughout the reign. But the English Barons had not much fight left in them. Northumberland, who had been ' crafty-sick ' while his son fought at Shrewsbury, was detached from the conspiracy by an offer of pardon, and, on being brought before the Peers, was found guilty only of " trespass," took a fresh oath of fealty to the King, and escaped all punishment (February, 1404). A year later, however, he signed a treaty for the partition of the Kingdom between himself, Glendower, and Sir Edmund Mortimer, and, joined by Mowbray and Bardolph, again raised the standard of revolt. But his attitude was still shifty and ambiguous, and the real leadership

of the renewed insurrection fell, as Shakspeare indicates, into the hands of Richard le Scrope, the warlike Archbishop of York. Scrope was a son of Lord Scrope of Bolton, and a younger brother of Richard, Earl of Wiltshire,* whose death at Bolingbroke's hands at Bristol he now sought to avenge. Scrope put forward an indictment of ten counts denouncing Henry of Derby as a traitor and usurper. Shakspeare puts into the Archbishop's mouth (Act I, Scene 3), a denunciation of the political fickleness of the masses :

" The commonwealth is sick of their own choice ;
Their over-greedy love hath surfeited :
An habitation giddy and unsure
Hath he that buildeth on the vulgar heart."

" With what loud applause " had Bolingbroke been acclaimed, " Before he was what you would'st have him be!" Now, with what genuine relief would the same men welcome the restoration of Richard of Bordeaux. But the indictment was somewhat belated as coming from a man who had been one of the committee of Peers who condemned Richard, and who had sat on Henry's left hand at the Coronation feast.

Of actual fighting the insurrection yielded little. The Archbishop and Mowbray found themselves confronted at Shipton Moor by Prince John and the Earl of Westmoreland. Though superior in numbers, they were induced to parley, but no sooner

* There has been some dispute as to whether Shakspeare, following Hall, was accurate in describing Scrope as a brother of Wiltshire. Holinshed and some of the earlier chroniclers (e.g. Walsingham) are against Hall, but Sir J. H. Ramsay (*Lancaster and York*, i, 87) following Foss, confirms Shakspeare's accuracy.

had their forces disbanded than the leaders were arrested, carried off in custody to Pontefract, and, despite the strong protest of Archbishop Arundel, were summarily executed as traitors at York (June 8th, 1405). The King himself was now in the North and was personally responsible for the denial of mercy to the Archbishop. The city of York opened its gates at his approach, and Northumberland's castles—Warkworth, Berwick, Alnwick—were, one after another, compelled to surrender. Northumberland himself had, according to his wont, withdrawn into Scotland, leaving his friends to bear the brunt of the King's wrath. Shakspeare's analysis of the character of this trimmer is relentless :

" 'Tis with my mind
As with the tide swell'd up unto its height,
That makes a still-stand, running neither way.
Fain would I go to meet the Archbishop,
But many thousand reasons hold me back.
I will resolve for Scotland : there am I,
Till time and vantage crave my company."

The Peers, meanwhile, declared both Northumberland and Bardolph guilty of treason and, in default of their appearance, the two noblemen were eventually condemned as traitors (December 4th, 1406), and their estates were declared confiscate as from May 6th, 1405.

It was nearly three years after the execution of Mowbray and the Archbishop, that Northumberland and Bardolph made their last effort against the King, for whose elevation to the throne they had been so largely responsible. Finding themselves not over

welcome in Scotland, they had joined Glendower in Wales, had thence made their way to France, and eventually, by way of Holland, had returned to Scotland. Early in 1408 they crossed the border and penetrated as far as Yorkshire, but on February 20 they were brought to battle on Bramham Moor, where Northumberland was killed and Bardolph was mortally wounded.

At last the Percy Rebellion was crushed. But the suppression of it had cost the King nine out of his fourteen years of reign, and the close of domestic strife found him a broken man :

" Will Fortune never come with both hands full,
But write her fair words still in foulest letters ?
She either gives a stomach, and no food,—
Such are the poor, in health ; or else a feast,
And takes away the stomach,—such are the rich,
That have abundance, and enjoy it not."

Henry had for some time been a victim to epilepsy ; the attacks now became more frequent and he knew himself to be a dying man. Shakspeare's account of the last ten years of the reign are very highly compressed, but to the essential truth of the situation he scrupulously adheres. Shakspeare is no arid annalist but the philosophical historian ; the unerring commentator upon political events. He embraces the whole situation in one comprehensive glance, and exhibits its salient features in a series of impressionist sketches which, stripped of all unnecessary and wearisome detail, throw into bold relief the ethical and political truths which the study of history is calculated to enforce.

The whole position of Henry of Lancaster upon the English throne was, as we have attempted to show, a contradiction in terms: at once an oligarch and a constitutionalist; at once a usurper and the foremost champion of the causes dear in all ages to Conservatives; at once successful rebel and stern repressor of rebellion, Henry was predestined to an "unquiet" reign. Nor did the issue falsify destiny. Of his relations with avowed opponents we have already seen something; but he had also, or imagined himself to have, foes in his own household. Every monarch is apt to be suspicious of the heir-apparent; one who owes his throne to a successful revolution is apt to be particularly jealous of his destined successor. Nor was Henry IV an exception to this rule. His jealous suspicions of Prince Hal would seem to have been intensified by genuine apprehension as to the stability of the young Prince's character.* Happily, the Prince was able to convince his father that suspicions and apprehensions were alike groundless, and the King, still young in years, but sorely tried and deeply scarred, was able to chant his *Nunc Dimittis*. He dare not, however, omit a final

* No authority for the famous Crown Scene is to be found in any strictly contemporary chronicler. Shakspeare bases his account, not only on the older play, but upon a passage in Holinshed, whose own authority was Hall. There is contemporary warrant for the presence of the Prince of Wales at his father's deathbed, and for the fact that he received the King's last kiss and blessing; but the picturesque story of the Prince's assumption of the crown first appears in the French chronicle of Monstrelet, who as Courtenay (i, 49) points out, prefaced his account with these words: "It was the custom in that country, whenever the King was ill, to place the royal crown on a cushion beside his bed, and for his successor to take it on his death." Hall and Holinshed accept the story uncritically, and even if the doubts of the chroniclers had been aroused, any dramatist worth his salt would have brushed them aside. As a mere historian, Shakspeare had sufficient warrant for the Scene, but even had he lacked historical justification, it could not have been denied to him as playwright.

warning to the Prince. The Lancastrian Crown was the result of a usurpation :

" God knows, my son,
By what bye-paths and indirect crook'd ways
I met this crown ; and I myself know well
How troublesome it sat upon my head."

But the Prince would ascend the throne by an hereditary title :

" With better quiet,
Better opinion, better confirmation."

Yet all trouble was by no means dissipated : time was needed to establish the new order ; experience alone could justify the novel constitutional experiment. Meanwhile the Prince would be well advised

" to busy giddy minds
With foreign quarrels ; that action, hence borne out,
May waste the memory of the former days."

The hint did not fall on dull ears. How it was taken the next chapter will show.

The end of Act IV marks the close of the reign of Henry IV. In Act V Henry of Monmouth is already King. Why did Shakspeare not make the end of his play coincide with the death of the old King ? Why are the first days of the new reign appended as a sort of epilogue to the two Parts of *Henry IV*, instead of being treated as an introduction to *Henry V* ? That Shakspeare was already contemplating another chapter of his " History " is clear from the concluding tag put into the mouth of Prince John :

" I will lay odds that, ere this year expire,

We bear our civil swords and native fire
As far as France. I heard a bird so sing,
Whose music, to my thinking, pleas'd the King."

Plainly, the leading motive of *Henry V* is already in the dramatist's mind. From the epilogue we should gather that Shakspeare—if the epilogue be his—intended to introduce Falstaff into *Henry V*. If that was, in truth, his intention, must we infer that he was diverted from the intention by the Queen's commands ; that *The Merry Wives of Windsor* saved a great epic from the desecration of Falstaff's presence. That the amorous Knight of *The Merry Wives* could not without unseemliness, have obtruded himself into *Henry V* must be obvious to anyone who has caught anything of the ethos of that wonderful patriotic poem. Even the half-formulated intention to carry the Falstaff of *Henry IV* into *Henry V* seems an outrage upon the poetic proprieties. It is inconsistent, moreover, with the argument which I shall presently put forward in reference to Act V of *Henry IV*. But the fact remains that, as regards the Chronicle Plays, Falstaff, though heard of, is seen no more. With the manner of his disappearance we shall be concerned in the next chapter.

In regard to *Henry IV* only a few words need to be added. Henry of Bolingbroke presents an interesting psychological study, though a much less interesting one than his son. He possessed many of the gifts and qualities which make for success in politics. He had courage, prudence, persistence ; he was not unversed in the arts of ingratiation and not overburdened with inconvenient scruples. Long ago King Richard had :

" Observed his courtship to the common people,
How he did seem to dive into their hearts."

York, a less suspicious and interested spectator, had marked the same thing:

" the duke, great Bolingbroke,—
Mounted upon a hot and fiery steed,
Which his aspiring rider seem'd to know,—
With slow but stately pace kept on his course,
While all tongues cried 'God save thee, Bolingbroke!'
Whilst he, from one side to the other turning,
Bareheaded, lower than his proud steed's neck,
Bespake them thus,—'I thank you, countrymen':
And thus still doing, thus he pass'd along."*

That Henry of Bolingbroke was ambitious goes without saying, but his ambition was limited to the practicable; it was not rooted, as Professor Dowden has well remarked, in " an inordinate desire to wreak his will upon the world and expend a fiery energy like that of Richard III; it is an ambition which aims at definite ends and can be held in reserve until these seem attainable."†

Henry IV was not a lovable man; he could win respect but not affection. No one ever spoke of him as Hotspur spoke of Richard, as Prince Hal spoke of Falstaff. No tear was shed over his bier. He was pre-eminently the professional politician, not "vile," as Hotspur would have it, but hard and unlovely. He was too calculating to snatch at an opportunity; but he never missed one; he could watch and wait; if not a devoted churchman like his son, he knew the

* *Richard II*, Act v, sc. 2. † *Mind and Art*, p. 245.

political value of a good moral character; he was ruthless in striking at a rival or an enemy, but he never indulged in cruelty for cruelty's sake. Of his domestic life we get hardly a glimpse in Shakspeare, and not much elsewhere; we see only a man, groaning under public burdens almost too heavy to be borne; embittered by the oncoming of a foul disease, and dying in early middle age, lonely, loveless and disillusioned.

Of the other leading characters in this play enough has been said already, except of Prince Hal, to whose career and character the following chapter will be devoted. But there are shrewd touches in the slighter portraits of the secondary personages—the crafty and malignant Worcester; the Earl of Douglas, Hotspur's loyal and brave ally; the self-conscious Glendower; the sharply-differentiated companions of the fat Knight; the country Justices, Silence and Shallow; touches which the close observer of character will not miss.

Apart, however, from the studies of character; apart from the superb humour of its comedy, *Henry IV* possesses an absorbing and abiding fascination for the student of Politics. To the modern historian the reign of Henry IV is chiefly remarkable for the initiation of a singularly interesting constitutional experiment. The revolution of 1399 exalted Parliament to a position which it had never attained before and which it did not again attain until after the Revolution of 1688. The advanced party, led by Archbishop Arundel, attempted to make Parliament the direct instrument of government, or rather, to entrust the legislature with a control

over the executive. The experiment did not succeed. The country was not ripe for it. A parliamentary executive presupposes an advanced stage in the political education of the community, a high degree of administrative efficiency on the part of the government, and above all, a high level of social order prevalent throughout the country. None of these conditions were fulfilled in the England of the fifteenth century; more particularly during the reign of Henry VI. The Crown was always short of money; the executive was weak; governance became a byeword for chaos and corruption. But of all these phenomena, largely the result of the experiment initiated under Henry IV, we shall learn more when we come to deal with the still more unquiet times of Henry VI.

Needless to say that, with the constitutional niceties of the period, Shakspeare does not concern himself. It is in the play of the personal forces that he as dramatist and psychologist, is primarily interested. He is deeply conscious of the difficulties and anxieties in which Henry IV finds himself involved; but for dramatic purposes they must be embodied in the personal rivalries of individuals. Abstract causes may suffice for the philosophical historian; only the concrete can be certain of making an appeal to the theatre. Shakspeare knew his business as few have known it. But within the legitimate limits of drama, and subject to its limitations, he nevertheless contrives to convey political lessons which are appropriate to all times, and true under the most varying circumstances. Among these lessons there are few more valuable, and none more

enduring in verity, than that which may be deduced from the two Parts of *Henry IV*. " Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown." Especially uneasy will it lie when the crown has been attained by usurpation ; none the less if the usurpation be generally approved and ultimately justified. The makers of a revolution, however great the provocation, however " constitutional " the methods, are bound to find pitfalls in their path. Succeeding times may reap the benefit, but the deposition of a monarch, oblivious though he may have been of his duty to the State, the overthrow of an established order, even a corrupt one, can never be accomplished without discomfort to contemporaries and serious danger to the stability and even the safety of the Commonwealth. Few revolutions in history have been accompanied by less disorder, less shock to the Commonwealth, than that of 1399 ; but even so the leading actor could not escape the nemesis which invariably waits upon success in such an enterprise. The " indirect crook'd ways," by which Henry Bolingbroke attained the crown produced the inevitable crop of troubles. For the people the times were unquiet ; for the King there was neither repose nor happiness. The sole consolation of his declining years was derived from the hope that to his son the crown would descend " with better quiet, better confirmation." How that hope was realized the next chapter will tell.

CHAPTER V

KING HENRY THE FIFTH

THE SPIRIT OF ENGLAND IN VICTORY

" O when shall English men
With such acts fill a pen
Or England breed again
Such a King Harry ! "—DRAYTON.

" For as I am a soldier
A name that in my thoughts becomes me best."

HENRY V.

" Now know I, that the Lord helpeth His Anointed, and will hear him from His holy heaven : even with the wholesome strength of His right hand.

Some put their trust in chariots and some in horses: but we will remember the Name of the Lord our God." *Psalm xx.*

HENRY V follows, in literary as in historical order, immediately upon *Henry IV*. The two Parts of *Henry IV* were written before 1599 ; probably in 1597-1598 ; *Henry V* was written, or at any rate completed, in 1599, as appears from this passage in the Prologue to Act V :

" As, by a lesser but loving likelihood,

Were now the general of our gracious Empress
As in good time he may—from Ireland coming,
Bringing rebellion broached on his sword,
How many would the peaceful city quit
To welcome him!"

In these lines there is admittedly a clear reference to the expedition of the Earl of Essex to Ireland. Essex left for Ireland, accompanied by Shakspeare's friend and patron, Lord Southampton, on March 27th, 1599, and returned in September of the same year; but he by no means brought "rebellion broached on his sword." On the contrary, thanks to his own vanity or something worse, he was entirely worsted by the diplomacy of Tyrone, and returned to England to repay by treason the foolish indulgence of his royal mistress.

Shakspeare's *Henry V* must, therefore, have been finished in the summer of 1599. In composing it, Shakspeare appropriated everything that was worth taking from the earlier play, already utilized in *Henry IV*, *The Famous Victories of Henry V*; for the rest, he relied on Holinshed.

The opening lines of *Henry V* are of exceptional significance:

"O for a Muse of fire, that would ascend,
The brightest heaven of invention!"

These lines would seem to suggest that even Shakspeare quails before the task to which he had set himself in *Henry V*. He has attained to the full maturity of his powers; he is completely master of his craft; yet he gives utterance to a misgiving which

had never seemingly assailed him in his prentice days. How shall we explain this sudden diffidence?

Not entirely, I submit, by the obvious difficulties of stage-management to which the context of this opening chorus refers:

> " Can this cockpit hold
> The vasty fields of France? or may we cram
> Within this wooden O the very casques
> That did affright the air at Agincourt?
> O, pardon! since a crooked figure may
> Attest in little place a million;
> And let us, ciphers to this great accompt,
> On your imaginary forces work."

The resources of the new Globe Theatre (to the circular shape of which the O perhaps refers) were not, of course, equal to the setting of a magnificent martial pageant such as, on the modern stage, *Henry V* has become.

But Shakspeare, we may be sure, had something else in mind than the mere material accessories of stage-craft. He is now approaching the climax of his series of studies in English king-craft. He had painted the ineffective Saint in Henry VI; the superb full-blooded villain in the Marlowesque figure of Richard III; the stupid cruelty, the blustering weakness, the unfaithful stewardship of King John; the loveliness of outward form and the feebleness of character of Richard II; the masculine grip, but essentially finite achievement, of the "vile politician" Bolingbroke; all these, in their several ways, illustrate what Walter Pater described as "the irony of

kingship"; in all there is something, in many there is much lacking to complete success; to none did England render complete allegiance of heart or brain; upon none can we look as an ideal ruler; none secured happiness and repose at home, or high renown abroad; some, perhaps all, may evoke pity, but none can command affection combined with respect.

In *Henry V* Shakspeare got his chance of depicting an ideal Christian Knight; a ruler who was at once popular and successful; a man whom we may both love and admire.

Much more than that. Here at last was the chance of inditing a great national epic which should not be unworthy of the closing years of one of the greatest and, all difficulties considered, one of the most brilliantly successful reigns in English history. For in all his patriotic poetry Shakspeare strictly observed the most important of all the canons of this form of art: the law of indirectness. Anxious to pay homage to the great Queen, bent upon celebrating the heroic deeds of his contemporaries, Shakspeare, with consummate tact, always deals with a period sufficiently remote and with persons who had passed away. His political moral, therefore, is always oblique, and, on that account the more effective.

In *Henry V* he reaches the climax of his patriotic drama. Can he trust himself, with all his well-tried skill, with all his assured sense of conscious power, to rise to the full height of the great argument?

"O for a Muse of fire, that would ascend
The brightest heaven of invention!"

Well may he invoke the muse. How did she respond?

Regarded merely as a play, for theatrical performance, *Henry V* is not in the first rank of the Shakspearian dramas, nor even of the Chronicle Plays. As an acting play it is clearly inferior to *Henry IV* or *Richard III*. It is ill-constructed; the dramatic cohesion is loose; the ordinary rules of composition are imperfectly observed. There is an obvious lack of chiascuro. The pedantry of Fluellen supplies a note of genuine comedy, but the comedy scenes as a whole are wanting in variety and greatly inferior to those of *Henry IV*. The fat Knight, though Shakspeare was plainly right to kill him off, is terribly missed.

But we do wrong to regard *Henry V* as primarily sport for the playgoer. It is rather a great national epic in dramatic form; and regarded from this point of view, it is superb, unapproachable. Nowhere else in Shakspeare, still less in any other poet, are there to be found so many passages of such sustained and lofty eloquence; such inspiring appeals to the highest spirit of chivalry and patriotism.

That spirit is embodied in the character of the King. King Henry is commonly described as Shakspeare's "ideal hero in action"; as his model of chivalry; his "very perfect gentle knight." And the descriptions are obviously true. Yet Henry V, as drawn by Shakspeare, is no impossible hero; he is essentially human, with obvious imperfections and limitations. Primarily he is the soldier-King:

"I am a soldier
A name that in my thoughts becomes me best."

He has the great soldier's anxious care for the comfort and well-being of the troops under his command; he is punctual and methodical:

> " Now he weighs time
> Even to the utmost grain."

He knows that war is war, and cannot be conducted in kid gloves:

> " In peace there's nothing so becomes a man
> As modest stillness and humility:
> But when the blast of war blows in our ears,
> Then imitate the action of the tiger;
> Stiffen the sinews, summon up the blood,
> Disguise fair nature with hard-favoured rage;
> Then lend the eye a terrible aspect."

Yet terrible in battle, he is merciful in victory; he bids Uncle Exeter, when entering the surrendered city of Harfleur, " use mercy to them all "; above all, he is considerate to non-combatants: " We give express charge, that in our marches through the country there be nothing compelled from the villages, nothing taken but paid for, none of the French upbraided or abused in disdainful language "; but it is good policy that prescribes such conduct, not less than genuine humanity: " for when lenity and cruelty play for a kingdom, the gentler gamester is the soonest winner."

His simple piety is as unquestionable as his orthodox churchmanship; he bids his men, " dishonour not their mothers, and make their peace with God":

" Every subject's duty is the King's; but every subject's soul is his own. Therefore should every soldier in the wars do as every sick man in his bed, wash every mote out of his conscience: and dying so, death is to him advantage; or not dying, the time was blessedly lost wherein such preparation was gained; and in him that escapes, it were not sin to think that, making God so free an offer, He let him outlive that day to see His greatness and to teach others how they should prepare."

Like every great leader in war or peace, he combines perfect simplicity with perfect dignity, and both with the supreme gift of personal magnetism:

" For forth he goes and visits all his host;
Bids them good morrow with a modest smile,
And calls them brothers, friends and countrymen.
Upon his royal face there is no note
How dread an army hath enrounded him;
Nor doth he dedicate one jot of colour
Unto the weary and all-watchéd night,
But freshly looks, and over-bears attaint
With cheerful semblance and sweet majesty;
That every wretch, pining and pale before,
Beholding him, plucks comfort from his looks:
A largess universal, like the sun,
His liberal eye doth give to every one,
Thawing cold fear, that mean and gentle all
Behold, as may unworthiness define,
A little touch of Harry in the night."

Yet Henry V is, I repeat, no impossible hero or saint.

He is no God, but very man, and in some respects quite obviously his father's son. We rather resent the suggestion when Henry IV describes Prince Hal as " the noble image of his own youth " ; but it is true none the less ; Henry V is the son of the " vile politician " Bolingbroke. A vein of " policy " and calculation runs through his character and distinguishes his career.

He reveals the hereditary taint (if taint it be) quite plainly in his first soliloquy (*Henry IV*, Part I, Act I, Scene 2) :

PRINCE HENRY :

" I know you all, and will awhile uphold
The unyok'd humour of your idleness :
Yet herein will I imitate the sun,
Who doth permit the base contagious clouds
To smother up his beauty from the world,
That when he please again to be himself,
Being wanted, he may be more wonder'd at,
By breaking through the foul and ugly mists
Of vapours that did seem to strangle him.
If all the year were playing holidays,
To sport would be as tedious as to work ;
But when they seldom come, they wish'd for, come,
And nothing pleaseth but rare accidents.
So, when this loose behaviour I throw off,
And pay the debt I never promised,
By how much better than my word I am,
By so much shall I falsify men's hopes ;
And, like bright metal on a sullen ground,
My reformation, glittering o'er my fault,

Shall show more goodly and attract more eyes
Than that which hath no foil to set it off.
I'll so offend, to make offence a skill;
Redeeming time when men think least I will."

Most people, I think, will feel that this revelation, much lauded as are the sentiments by a certain school of commentators, is not quite an agreeable one. We had hoped that the riotous fun with Falstaff was wholly spontaneous; sheer high spirits without a touch of vice; ebullient enjoyment of the priceless gifts of youth and physical well-being. But alas! it is, after all, shrewd political calculation worthy of a vile politician like his father. It may be that Shakspeare wished, as some hint, to correct the monastic chroniclers who drew a sharp line of distinction between the wild and riotous Prince and the serious, sober-minded King; who represented the sudden change as due to miraculous conversion. It may be that Shakspeare wished to delineate a perfectly consistent character, that he desired to exhibit his Christian Knight as a natural product of evolution from the protoplasm of the Prince. But I cannot bring myself to believe it; and if I could I should prefer the ecclesiastical interpretation. I would rather have a miraculous conversion than this shrewd calculation of political and ethical profit and loss. The self-consciousness of the first soliloquy seems to take the edge off the Falstaff scenes; to destroy their spontaneity as far as Prince Hal is concerned; to turn the high-spirited reckless lad into a premature politician, a precocious prig.

There is, however, another suggestion which

demands a passing notice. May not the "policy" have been in the poet, rather than in the Prince? Was the soliloquy a politic concession to the marprelate Puritans? If so, was it not soon forgotten and repented of? Else, what can we make of the conversation, in the very first scene of *Henry V*, between the Bishop of Ely and Archbishop Chichele:

> "The breath no sooner left his father's body
> But that his wildness, mortified in him,
> Seem'd to die too, yea, at that very moment,
> Consideration, like an angel, came,
> And whipp'd the offending Adam out of him,
> Leaving his body as a paradise,
> To envelop and contain celestial spirits.
> Never was such a sudden scholar made;
> Never came reformation in a flood,
> With such a heady current, scouring faults;
> Nor never Hydra-headed wilfulness
> So soon did lose his seat, and all at once,
> As in this King."

Gervinus characteristically walks straight into the snare: "Indifferently, even wilfully, he (Prince Hal) fosters the show of evil because in himself he is sure of the perfect essence of a genuine humanity. He sports with public opinion because any hour he can give it the lie." . . .

It may be so; but if it is, does it not diminish our love for the man in proportion as it increases our respect for the statesman? Must we, after all, write down Prince Hal a prig? For my own part, I am not

prepared thus tamely to surrender one of the few remaining heroes of my boyhood.

Yet suspicion once planted in the mind is difficult to expel. The policy of Prince Hal as King seems to confirm it. One of his first acts was to plunge into a war which may have been politic, but was certainly unjust. Shakspeare gets over the difficulty by throwing the whole responsibility for this war on to the broad backs of the King's ecclesiastical advisers. Henry V is a devout churchman. He will take no step without the sanction of his spiritual pastors :

> " May I with right and conscience make this claim ? "

The ecclesiastics had already decided that he not only might but must. The Church had many enemies. The one hope of safety was by a foreign war, to divert their attention from domestic politics. The very first line of the play betrays the anxiety of the great ecclesiastics :

> " that self-bill is urg'd
> Which in the eleventh year of the last King's reign
> Was like, and had indeed against us pass'd,
> But that the scrambling and unquiet time
> Did push it out of further question."

The " self-bill " to which the Archbishop here refers contained a proposal for a large measure of disendowment. The proposal did not lack precedents. A great churchman like William of Wykeham had not scrupled to suppress various religious foundations in order to provide endowment for the two

St. Mary Winton Colleges. William of Waynflete followed his master's example for the benefit of his foundation, St. Mary Magdalen College. The *Alien Priories* had been, very properly, suppressed under Edward III; but the attack upon church property now threatened was a much more imposing and a much more formidable one. The Knights of the Shire proposed that the lands of the Bishops and Religious Corporations should be confiscated for the endowment, as Archbishop Chichele points out, of:

> " Full fifteen earls and fifteen hundred knights,
> Six thousand and two hundred good esquires;
> And . . .
> A hundred alms-houses right well supplied; "

while £20,000 was to be bestowed upon the King. The extravagance and absurdity of such a proposal ensured, as Bishop Stubbs justly says, its own rejection. Yet the Church, as its leaders well knew, was not in a strong position to repel attacks.

At no period of the Middle Ages had the English Church less of popular support behind it than in the fifteenth century. Had the attack of Henry VIII been ante-dated by a century, it would have encountered far less resistance, and the changes effected in Church polity, and probably also in Church doctrine, would have been far more drastic. Many causes combined to diminish popular regard for the Church in the fifteenth century. The Babylonish captivity, the seventy years exile of the Papacy at Avignon, had been followed by the pitiable and scandalous spectacle of the Papal schism when, as Macaulay

wrote in a famous passage: "Two Popes, each with a doubtful title, made all Europe ring with their mutual invectives and anathemas. . . . The plain Christian people brought up in the belief that it was a sacred duty to be in communion with the Head of the Church were unable to discover, amidst conflicting testimonies and conflicting arguments, to which of the two worthless priests who were cursing and reviling each other, the headship of the Church rightfully belonged."* The coincidence of the Hundred Years War and the Babylonish captivity naturally accentuated the anti-Papal feeling which in any case would have been aroused in England by the transference of the Papal See from Rome to a French city. The Papacy had clearly ceased for the time being to be supra-national. But the loss of its supra-national position did not diminish either its spiritual pretensions or its fiscal demands. Never were the Papal pretensions more loftily sustained, never were its demands upon the purses of the faithful heavier or more incessant, than during the residence at Avignon. In his attack upon the Papal primacy, Wyclif unquestionably had behind him the great mass of the English laity. Much of this support, however, was alienated by his subsequent attack upon Catholic doctrine, and still more perhaps by the fraternisation of the "poor priests" with the leaders of the communistic insurrection of 1381.

The Church took full tactical advantage of Wyclif's blunders. But it ignored, to its undoing, the genuine substratum of popular support behind the Lollard movement. The Lancastrian revolution was in part

* Essays, i, 219.

a consequence, in part a cause, of the ecclesiastical reaction. In matters of State, no less than of Church policy, Henry IV relied largely upon the advice of Archbishop Arundel. One of the first acts of Henry V was to deprive his father's counsellor of the Great Seal, but it was promptly transferred to Bishop Henry (Beaufort) of Winchester. At no time in its long history was the English Church more orthodox than under the Lancastrians; at no time were its leaders more politically influential; at no time were they more exclusively aristocratic; at no time had the Church less sympathy with or less hold upon the masses of the people.

The anxiety of Chichele, who in 1414 succeeded Arundel as Archbishop of Canterbury, was not, therefore, unwarrantable. It may not, however, be inferred, too hastily, that the higher clergy were responsible for the renewal of the French War. Shakspeare follows Holinshed in imputing the blame to them: Holinshed relied upon Hall, who was the first to fix upon the clergy this serious charge. How far can it be sustained? The account of the Leicester Parliament, given by Hall, is certainly inaccurate. Chichele had not yet become Archbishop. The speeches assigned by Hall to the Archbishop and to the old Earl of Westmoreland respectively, bear manifest tokens, as Bishop Stubbs justly points out, of later composition. Still, the fact remains that the clergy, even if they did not precipitate the war, did very cordially support the claims of Henry V to the French throne, and voted large contributions to the sustenance of the contest which ensued.

But whatever may be the historical justification

for the part imputed by Shakspeare to the clergy, there can be no question as to the ingenuity of the dramatist in thus shifting the responsibility from the shoulders of his hero on to those of a class which was low in popular esteem. Thus did he wipe out one of the two blots upon the escutcheon of an otherwise blameless King.

The other blot is the cruel treatment of the Lollards. The prosecution of Sir John Oldcastle, a leading Lollard, by Archbishop Arundel, did much to provoke a general rising of the Lollards in London. The vigilance of the Government frustrated the preparations of the Lollards and the insurrection fizzled out. Yet in January, 1414, sixty-nine persons were condemned for treason, and, of these, thirty-seven were drawn and hung. But of all this we hear nothing in the play. Shakspeare, writing at the end of the sixteenth century, was far too tactful to involve himself needlessly in such a controversy. For obvious reasons he chose to concentrate the attention of his audience upon the Agincourt campaign. For all that led up to it he holds the Church responsible.

Yet even Shakspeare bids us remember the counsel given to his son by the dying Bolingbroke :

> " Be it thy course to busy giddy minds
> With foreign quarrels, that action, hence borne out,
> May waste the memory of former days."

There is, it must be confessed, a prompt and somewhat sinister correspondence between the counsel of the father and the conduct of the son.

But the most serious indictment against Henry of Monmouth has still to be met. Can we approve, can we ever forgive the abrupt repudiation of Falstaff?

With the unerring tact of a supreme artist this sorry business is got over in the last Act of *Henry IV*. Such a scene could not be permitted to intrude upon a patriotic poem like *Henry V*. Falstaff himself must be kept out of sight. We hear of him; his deathbed is described in graphic detail; but though we learn of his end, we never see the fat Knight again after his arrest in the last Act of *Henry IV*.

The incidents connected with his dismissal must be briefly recalled. The Coronation Service is just ended; the royal procession has just emerged from the Abbey; Falstaff, who on the news of Henry IV's death and Prince Hal's accession, has ridden up post haste from Gloucestershire, arrives travel-stained at Westminster just in time to acclaim the new King as he issues from the Abbey. Falstaff's heart is full; he is beside himself with excitement; utterly forgetful of decorum he hails his old companion:

"God save Thy Grace Prince Hal! my royal Hal!"

Pistol chimes in:

"The heavens thee guard and keep, most royal imp of fame!"

"God save thee, my sweet boy!"

The imprecation of the blessing; the affectionate address are alike obviously sincere; but could anything be conceived more disconcerting to the new-crowned King? Still under the spell of the splendid

ceremony in which he had played the leading part; just consecrated, by a solemn sacrament, with all the ritual which to a devout churchman meant so much, Henry V is suddenly confronted with the boon companions of his riotous youth. Was it possible for him, on the threshold of a reign which he had resolved to dedicate to high and noble purpose to act otherwise than as he did? Yet his words strike a chill not only into Falstaff but into all who for the last three hundred years have listened to them:

"I know thee not, old man: fall to thy prayers;
How ill white hairs become a fool and jester!
I have long dream'd of such a kind of man,
So surfeit-swell'd, so old, and so profane;
But, being awake, I do despise my dream.
Make less thy body hence, and more thy grace;
Leave gormandising; know the grave doth gape
For thee thrice wider than for other men.—
Reply not to me with a fool-born jest:
Presume not that I am the thing I was;
For God doth know, so shall the world perceive,
That I have turn'd away my former self;
So will I those that kept me company."

The repudiation was plainly inevitable. The King could not have done otherwise. Falstaff, though utterly dumbfounded by the treatment, has the good sense and generosity to admit it. He comforts himself indeed with the reflection that the private friend will soon atone for the public and politic severity of the King. "This that you heard," says the Knight to Master Shallow, "was but colour." "I shall be sent

for in private to him: look you, he must seem thus to the world."

But Falstaff knows only one side of Henry's character; and that the most superficial; he has not plumbed its depths. "I shall be sent for soon at night." Instead, the Chief Justice arrives with orders to arrest him, and Falstaff and his company are promptly carried off to the Fleet.

What are we to make of it? What does Shakspeare mean us to make of it? Must we applaud the King? Or, does our gorge rise against the man who could not only turn his back upon an old friend but thus admonish him to boot? Mr. A. C. Bradley, in a singularly subtle analysis of the incident, suggests that even if the rejection of Falstaff were inevitable Henry might have spared him the lecture, That, at least, was gratuitous; while the subsequent arrest was simply superfluous cruelty. This, at any rate was the act, so cold-blooded and deliberate, which broke the old man's heart. The fact that it was broken we learn on the testimony of three different persons, none of whom, as Mr. Bradley points out was very sentimental. "This King has killed his heart," says Mrs. Quickly; "the King," says Corporal Nym, "hath run bad humours on the Knight that's the even of it"; Pistol agrees:

> "Nym, thou has spoke the right;
> His heart is fracted and corroborate."

We cannot refuse such testimony. The words carry conviction to us. We know that these simple folk spoke the literal truth. Falstaff had attached himself

to Hal, not for what he could get out of the Prince, but because he loved the lad. The love was not reciprocated. If the Prince himself may be believed, his association with Falstaff was an act of policy.

It is not easy perhaps to avoid a feeling of resentment; but, even so, we have no right to feel surprise. If we do, our surprise must be due, as Mr. Bradley suggests, to two causes: first, because Falstaff has thrown over us the spell which he threw over his own creator; and, secondly, because, despite the clear warnings of Shakspeare, we have persisted in misinterpreting the character of Henry of Monmouth. "There is," as Henry himself reminds us, "a soul of goodness in things evil." Conversely, there is a vein of hardness and policy in a character as near perfect as that of Henry V.*

Shakspeare's delineation is at once absolutely self-consistent, and in general accord alike with contemporary opinion and with that of modern critics. One illustration of each must suffice. "Henry V was," writes Monstrelet, "very wise and skilled in all matters with which he wished to deal and of very haughty will. In truth, he was so feared and redoubted by his princes and captains that there were none, however close akin to him or high in his favour who dared disobey his decrees . . . Those who transgressed or infringed his commands he punished very severaly without showing any mercy."†

According to other chroniclers, Henry, on his accession, called together his former companions,

* My debt to Mr. A. C. Bradley's brilliant lecture on *The Rejection of Falstaff* (first published in the *Fortnightly Review* for May, 1902) will be sufficiently obvious, but it demands specific and grateful acknowledgment.

† Monstrelet *Chroniques*, liv. i.c. 275.

frankly told them of his own intended reformation, bestowed handsome presents upon them, but banished them from his presence until they had given proofs of a reformation in character and conduct similar to his own. Bishop Stubbs's testimonial to Henry V is indited in the most glowing terms:

"If we set aside the charges of sacrificing the welfare of his country to an unjustifiable war of aggression, and of being a religious persecutor, Henry V stands before us as one of the greatest and purest characters in English History—a figure not unworthy to be placed by the side of Edward I. No sovereign who ever reigned has won from contemporary writers such a singular unison of praises. He was religious, pure in life, temperate, liberal, careful and yet splendid, merciful, truthful, and honourable; 'discreet in word, provident in counsel, prudent in judgment, modest in look, magnanimous in act,' a brilliant soldier, a sound diplomatist, an able organizer, and consolidator of all forces at his command; the restorer of the English navy, the founder of our military, international, and maritime laws. A true Englishman, with all the greatness and none of the glaring faults of his Plantagenet ancestors, he stands forth as the typical mediæval hero. At the same time he is a laborious man of business, a self-denying and hardy warrior, a cultivated scholar, and a most devout and charitable Christian."

It would be incongruous if Falstaff were permitted to intrude upon such company, and no man had a nicer sense of the congruities than Shakspeare. Falstaff's end is described with an intermingling of

humour and pathos which is at once perfect in taste and in appropriateness. Pistol brings the news:

" Bardolph, be blithe ;—Nym, rouse thy vaunting veins ;—
Boy, bristle thy courage up ;—for Falstaff he is dead,
And we must yearn therefore."

There is no mistaking the genuineness of Bardolph's outburst when he learns the news :

" Would I were with him, wheresome'er he is either in heaven or in hell ! "

But the hostess repudiates the alternative :

" Nay, sure, he's not in hell : he's in Arthur's bosom, if ever man went to Arthur's bosom. 'A made a finer end, and went away, an it had been any christom child ; 'a parted even just between twelve and one, even at the turning o' the tide : for after I saw him fumble with the sheets, and play with flowers, and smile upon his fingers' ends, I knew there was but one way ; for his nose was as sharp as a pen, and 'a babbled of green fields."

Thus Falstaff disappears from the scene. Thenceforward with relatively little of comedy relief—comedy supplied mainly by a good-hearted Welsh pedant, a grave Scot and a hot-tempered Irishman—we can concentrate attention upon the political aspect of this great epic poem.

To the success of the epic it was essential that King Henry should first make sure of the ethical ground for his projected enterprise :

" My learned lord, we pray you to proceed,

And justly and religiously unfold
Why the law Salique, that they have in France,
Or should, or should not, bar us in our claim:

. . . . . .

Therefore take heed how you impawn our person,
How you awake our sleeping sword of war:
We charge you, in the name of God, take heed;
For never two such kingdoms did contend
Without much fall of blood. . . . .

. . . . . .

Under this conjuration, speak, my lord;
For we will hear, note, and believe in heart
That what you speak is in your conscience wash'd
As pure as sin with baptism."

The case is argued by the Archbishop, with a detail which is dramatically wearisome, but the conclusion is announced without a scintilla of hesitation:

"The sin upon my head, dread sovereign!
For in the Book of Numbers is it writ,—
When the man dies, let the inheritance
Descend unto the daughter. Gracious lord,
Stand for your own; unwind your bloody flag."

The King's reason is convinced; his conscience is at ease:

"Now are we well resolv'd; and, by God's help,
And yours, the noble sinews of our power,
France being ours, we'll bend it to our awe,
Or break it all to pieces: or there we'll sit,
Ruling in large and ample empery
O'er France and all her almost kingly dukedoms."

" Tell you the Dauphin I am coming on " (this to the Ambassadors from France)
To venge me as I may, and to put forth
My rightful hand in a well-hallowed cause."

It may be, as a modern historian has asserted, that Henry's "conscience was ever his accomplice, not his guide"; it may even be that this was Shakspeare's own view of his character; but if there be a suggestion of this view in the first Act it is too subtle to impair the general impression of high-souled and pure-minded patriotism which is left, and clearly intended to be left, on the mind of the ordinary spectator.

Before the expedition actually sails we have, first, the end of Falstaff, already described; and secondly, the discovery and punishment of a formidable conspiracy against the throne.

The conspiracy was detected only in July, 1415, when the King was at Southampton and just on the point of embarking for France. The leaders of it were Richard, Earl of Cambridge, the second son of the Duke of York, who played so interesting but inglorious a part in *Richard II*, and brother of Edward, Duke of York, who appears in this play; Henry, third Lord Scrope of Masham, nephew of Archbishop Scrope and Sir Thomas Grey of Heaton. Their design was, as soon as the expedition had sailed for France, to carry off Edmund, Earl of March, Cambridge's brother-in-law, and proclaim him King as heir to Lionel, Duke of Clarence. The conspiracy was betrayed to the King; the ringleaders were promptly arrested and executed. Henry

was a merciful man, but when he struck, he struck hard. Having suppressed the only conspiracy of the reign, Henry was at last free to sail for France.

He weighed anchor with his " fleet majestical " on August 11th, 1415; he landed within some three miles of Harfleur on the 14th, and on the 17th advanced against the town. In the great host which he led there were men of all sorts: men of honour and renown like " old Sir Thomas Erpingham "; rascals like Bardolph, Nym and Pistol, out to get what they could; Englishmen, Welshmen, Irishmen, and even Scotchmen.

The garrison of Harfleur, hard pressed by the English assault, agreed on September 18th, to surrender if not relieved in four days. No succour came, and on September 27th Henry entered the town. His army was already decimated by disease; many of the sick had to be sent home, and with the rest, after leaving a force to garrison Harfleur, Henry started off to march to Calais. His way was barred by a French force at least three times the size of his own. Could he win through?

Heavy indeed was the King's responsibility; and heavily did the sense of it rest upon him. He would gladly have parleyed with the French King; and have surrendered Harfleur in return for free passage to Calais, for:

" My people are with sickness much enfeebled,
My numbers lessened and those few I have
Almost no better than so many French."

But the French terms are too high: Henry and his

enfeebled army seem to be at their mercy ; the issue must be fought out.

There is nothing finer in English literature than the scenes which follow. First comes the description of the French camp ; the vain boasting, the obscene jesting and riotous disorder among

" The confident and over-lusty French."

Contrasted with this we see :

" the poor condemn'd English,
Like sacrifices by their watchful fires
Sit patiently and inly ruminate
The morning's danger."

The King does not conceal from himself or from his captains the danger which confronts him :

" Gloucester, 'tis true that we are in great danger ;
The greater, therefore, should our courage be."

Nevertheless, his own vigil must be a lonely one : no one may share the crushing responsibility of the King :

" I and my bosom must debate a while,
And then I would no other company."

Yet, mingling freely, though disguised, with his soldiers, he is destined to hear some home truths ere the night is far spent. His own sense of fellowship comes out clearly, though in ironic speech : " Though I speak it to you, I think the King is but a man as I am ; the violet smells to him as it doth to me ; the element shows to him as it doth to me ; all his senses have but human conditions." With rough philosophy his soldiers lay all responsibility upon the King. " If

the cause be wrong," says one, "our obedience to the King wipes the crime of it out of us." "If the cause be not good," insists another, "the King himself hath a heavy reckoning to make." The reasoning makes a deep impression upon the sensitive mind of King Henry:

"Upon the King!—let us our lives, our souls,
Our debts, our careful wives,
Our children, and our sins, lay on the King!
We must bear all. O hard condition.
Twin-born with greatness, subject to the breath
Of every fool, whose sense no more can feel
But his own imaging! What infinite heart's ease
Must kings neglect, that private men enjoy!
And what have kings, that privates have not too,
Save ceremony,—save general ceremony?"

Even more self-revealing is the prayer for victory, for in it we see the mind of the great churchman with his reliance upon the efficacy of penance and works:

"O God of battles! steel my soldiers' hearts;
Possess them not with fear; take from them now
The sense of reckoning, if the opposed numbers
Pluck their hearts from them!—Not to-day, O Lord,
O, not to-day, think not upon the fault
My father made in compassing the crown!
I Richard's body have interred new,
And on it have bestowed more contrite tears
Than from it issued forced drops of blood;
Five hundred poor I have in yearly pay,
Who twice a day their withered hands hold up

Toward heaven, to pardon blood; and I have built
Two chantries, where the sad and solemn priests
Sing still for Richard's soul. More will I do;
Though all that I can do is nothing worth,
Since that my penitance comes after all,
Imploring pardon."

Before the opposing armies actually join in battle, we have a glimpse of the two camps: in the one we see the French full of confidence:

"let us but blow on them,
The vapour of our valour will o'erturn them";

in the other the English, conscious of inferiority in numbers, but trusting in the justice of their cause:

"God's arm strike with us! 'tis a fearful odds."

But, fearful though the odds are, King Henry will have none of cousin Westmoreland's wish for more men:

"No, faith, my coz, wish not a man from England;
God's peace! I would not wish so great an honour,
As one man more, methinks, would share from me,
For the best hope I have. . . .
He that outlives this day, and comes safe home,
Will stand a tip-toe when this day is nam'd,
And rouse him at the name of Crispian.
. . . . . .
This story shall the good man teach his son;
And Crispin Crispian shall ne'er go by,
From this day to the ending of the world,

But we in it shall be remembered,—
We few, we happy few, we band of brothers;
For he to-day that sheds his blood with me
Shall be my brother; be he ne'er so vile,
This day shall gentle his condition."

The King's proud confidence was justified: but, when the day was over and the battle won there was but one thought in his mind:

"O God, Thy arm was here;
And not to us, but to Thy arm alone
Ascribe we all!"

Carlyle has exactly caught the spirit of this scene, and his comment is worth quoting: "The battle of Agincourt strikes me as one of the most perfect things in its sort, we anywhere have of Shakspeare's. . . . There is a noble patriotism in it—far other than the indifference you sometimes hear ascribed to Shakspeare. A true English heart breathes, calm and strong through the whole business; not boisterous, protrusive, all the better for that. There is a sound in it like the ring of steel. This man, too, had a right stroke in him, had it come to that."*

The victory was won at a relatively light cost. Holinshed mentions two estimates of the English loss; the higher, to which the chronicler himself inclines, put it at 500-600 men; the lower, adopted by Shakspeare, at only twenty-five. The lustre of the victory was dimmed, however, by an incident, as to the precise nature of which the chroniclers are not themselves clear. That Henry gave an order for the

* *Heroes*, p. 102.

killing of the French prisoners taken in the battle is certain. What was the provocation for the order? Holinshed gives two divergent accounts. According to one, the French rallied after the main battle and threatened a rescue of the prisoners, whereupon the King threatened the slaughter of the prisoners already in his hands, as well as of those who might afterwards be taken. According to the other, the slaughter was a reprisal for a treacherous attack upon the lackeys and boys who were left to look after the baggage. Shakspeare characteristically adopts both versions, without any attempt to discriminate between them. The one he puts into the mouths of the two gallant Welshmen:

"FLU: Kill the poys and the luggage! 'tis expressly against the law of armes: 'tis as arrant a piece of knavery, mark you now, as can be offert; in your conscience, now, is it not?"

"GOW: 'Tis certain there's not a poy left alive; and the cowardly rascals that ran from the battle ha' done this slaughter; besides, they have burned and carried away all that was in the King's tent; wherefore the King, most worthily, hath caused every soldier to cut his prisoner's throat. O, 'tis a gallant King!"

"FLU: Ay, he was porn at Monmouth, Captain Gower."

Henry himself would seem to adopt the version of the counter-attack (though the matter is far from clear) and threatens that he:

"Will cut the throats of those we have, and not a man of them that we shall take shall taste of mercy."

Shakspeare is too faithful a biographer to omit the incident, but he shows none of the anxiety of the critical historian to get at the precise truth of the commonly accepted story.

In the last Act of the play we have a conspicuous fore-shortening of events. The chorus describes the return of the victorious King to England. When his lords would have him re-enter London in triumph :

> . . . " he forbids it,
> Being free from vainness and self-glorious pride ;
> Giving full trophy, signal, and ostent,
> Quite from himself to God."

But the citizens are not to be denied :

> " The mayor and all his brethren, in best sort,—
> Like to the senators of antique Rome,
> With the plebeians swarming at their heels,—
> Go forth and fetch their conquering Cæsar in."

Though the chorus transports us to England the action of the last Act takes place wholly in France. The events there recorded, the conference at Troyes and the marriage of the King with the Princess Katharine of France would appear from the play to have followed immediately upon the victory at Agincourt. The compression is in a dramatic sense wholly justified, nor is it really opposed to essential historical truth. Between the Agincourt campaign and the Treaty of Troyes there was, as a fact, an interval of five years, yet the two events are causally connected, and Shakspeare has ample warrant for exhibiting them in close conjunction. He confounds,

it is true, a conference between Henry and the Duke of Burgundy, which took place near Meulan, on the Seine, in May, 1419, with the conference which met a year later at Troyes; he brings on to the stage in France great nobles who were as a fact in England at the time; but it is not for such details that we go to Shakspeare. The important point to observe is that though Shakspeare does subordinate history to drama; though he compresses and fore-shortens; though he is careless as to details, he never falsifies the essential verities; he never misleads. The historian is bound to record much that the dramatist may legitimately neglect: he must follow the weary protraction of the war in France; the effort of the Emperor Sigismund to mediate between England and France; the abortive conferences held at Calais between the Emperor, King Henry, the Duke of Burgundy, and the French (September, 1416); the renewed invasion of France in 1417 and the successful campaign in Normandy; the capture of Rouen in 1419; the internal dissensions in France; the murder of the Duke of Burgundy at the hands of the *Dauphinois*; the renewal of negotiations between Henry and the young Duke of Burgundy, *Philippe le Bon*; the acceptance of Henry's terms by Charles VI of France, and the final signature of the Treaty at Troyes. There was an obvious attempt to obtain from France "a gentle peace and loving concord"* by dangling before King Henry's eyes the dazzling charms of the Princess Katharine. To those charms the King fell an easy victim, but he did not, on

* Holinshed, 108.

that account, relax the rigour of the terms which he dictated to his beaten foes :

" If, Duke of Burgundy, you would the peace
Whose want gives growth to the imperfections
Which you have cited, you must buy that peace
With full accord to all our just demands."

Henry was to be Regent of France during the lifetime of Charles VI, and to succeed to the throne on his death. There were, however, large portions of France of which Charles VI was not, *de facto*, master, and of which he could not dispose. The terms obtained at Troyes were, therefore, more imposing on paper than in fact. But the marriage pact was a reality. Henry and Katharine were married at Troyes on Trinity Sunday (June 2nd), 1420, and in February, 1421, they came to England. The Queen was crowned at Westminster on February 23rd, and immediately afterwards accompanied the King on a royal progress through the Midlands and the North. But the progress was interrupted by bad news from France ; the King was compelled to resume the campaign in person, and in September, 1422, he died in France. Meantime (December 6th) an heir to the throne had been born at Windsor.

Of the events subsequent to the Treaty of Troyes we learn nothing from Shakspeare. He rings down the curtain, if not actually to the sound of marriage bells, at least in active preparations for that auspicious event :

" God, the best maker of all marriages,
Combine your hearts in one, your realms in one."

It is a fitting close to a great epic poem. Regarding it from that point of view, it has not seemed necessary to say much of the comedy scenes. Unlike the corresponding scenes in *Henry IV*, they are strictly subordinated to the main action of the drama. It has even been suggested that resting, as the comedy does, upon the contrasted idiosyncracies of the Scot, the Welshman and the Irishman, it is in itself intended to subserve a political purpose: to indicate the essential unity of the sub-nationalities in the army of a truly national King. Be this as it may, the comedy is clearly subordinated to the history. In *Henry V* Shakspeare reached the zenith of his patriotic drama. He returned to it, quite at the close of his career, in *Henry VIII*, but, alike in date of composition and in historical sequence, *Henry VIII* is somewhat detached from the rest of the series. If we may momentarily regard the English Chronicle Plays as a continuous national epic, *Henry V* is clearly its climax.

And if *Henry V* is the climax of the series, the Treaty of Troyes is the climax of *Henry V*. Thus we leave Henry of Monmouth at the acme of his prosperity, personal and political. Thanks to his personal prowess in the field, his rule is accepted, though somewhat sullenly, in France. In England his popularity is undimmed by domestic discord. Truly the soil of his father's achievement had gone with him into the grave. For a brief moment the Lancastrian *régime*, victorious abroad, popular at home, had been able to conciliate the affections of the great mass of Englishmen. But only for the moment. The personal popularity of the King

hushed the sounds of dynastic strife, and concealed the essential weakness of the constitutional experiment by which and for which the Lancastrians stood. But the clouds, dispersed for a moment by the martial sun of Henry of Monmouth, quickly gathered again around the cradle of Henry of Windsor.

It has been hinted, not infrequently, that Henry V is the "ideal hero" of Shakspearean commentators rather than of Shakspeare himself. There is some substance in the hint. Shakspeare is no flattering portrait painter, but a ruthless analyst of character. He reveals character as he reads it: it is for others to draw the inferences. That he is himself strongly attracted—as who is not?—by many sides of Henry's character is plain. But not less plain is the primary purpose with which *Henry V* was written and produced. Shakspeare, dramatist and patriot, wanted a theme through which there might reverberate the echoes of that spirit of patriotic exaltation which was characteristic of the closing years of the reign of Queen Elizabeth. That was an age of great deeds and great men. Shakspeare desired to interpret the age to itself. His method, as always, was oblique. The lessons he enforced were indirect. For the purpose he had in view, Henry V was precisely adapted, and he utilized his materials with superb skill. Thus *Henry V* remains, and will remain, a sufficiently accurate chronicle of a notable reign, an acute analysis of character, but essentially and primarily the model for all time of patriotic poetry: perfect in taste and tact; never lacking in dignity; but infused throughout with the glow which comes, and can only come, from a passionate love of country and of kind.

CHAPTER VI

THE HOUSE DIVIDED

LANCASTER AND YORK—HENRY VI AND EDWARD IV

THE WARS OF THE ROSES

" Oh ! if you raise this house against this house
It will the wofullest division prove
That ever fell upon this cursed earth."

BISHOP OF CARLISLE, ap. *Richard II.*

" The Wars of the Roses have been described as a mere struggle of noble factions. As regards the actual fighting, from St. Albans to Tewkesbury, it is indeed characteristic that, as Comines noted, it was all done by the nobles and their retainers. But it would be a very superficial view which ignored the deep-seated causes leading up to so obstinate a struggle, or failed to discern the momentous results issuing from it."—A. L. SMITH.

" For certanly ther mey no grettir perell growe to a prince than to have a subgett equepolent to hymselff."—FORTESCUE, *De Monarchia.*

" It was these family feuds more than any other thing (far more than the dynastic question, which was not at first prominent) that led to the division of England into two hostile camps."—

C. R. L. FLETCHER.

UNDER Henry V the fortunes of the Lancastrian House reached their zenith. But not even the orthodox churchmanship and unaffected piety of that chivalrous Knight, not even his splendid successes in the field, not even his modesty in the hour of victory could ultimately avert the nemesis which waited upon Bolingbroke's usurpation and throughout dogged the steps of the Lancastrians. The prediction of the Bishop of Carlisle had still to be fulfilled :

" Oh ! if you raise this house against this house

. . . . . .

Peace shall go sleep with Turks and infidels,
And in this seat of peace, tumultuous war
Shall kin with kin and kind with kind confound."

In the three Parts of *Henry VI* and in *Richard III* —the Yorkist tetralogy, if we may so term it—we have the working out of the doom pronounced upon the original act of usurpation. These plays should, therefore, be studied in close conjunction, and to them this chapter and the next will be devoted.

In the three Parts of *Henry VI* the Shakspearean commentators find their richest mine of tangled and disputed points of criticism, and on this matter, therefore, a few preliminary words must be said.

In regard to Part I, there has been from Malone onwards a remarkable consensus of critical opinion. I know indeed of no critic of repute, except Mr. Halliwell-Phillipps, who regards the First Part of *Henry VI* as in substance the work of Shakspeare ; and even Mr. Halliwell-Phillipps only goes so far

as to describe it as "in all probability his earliest complete dramatic work."* But the weight of critical opinion is overwhelmingly against him. "In this play," writes Dyce, "little or nothing of Shakspeare is to be traced," though Dyce admits that the fact that it was admitted into the First Folio may be accepted as proof that Shakspeare touched it here and there. Mr. Furnivall states confidently that "the only part to be put down to Shakspeare is the Temple Garden scene." Professor Edward Dowden places it in the pre-Shakspearean group of plays touched by Shakspeare between 1588 and 1591, plays "of blood, bombast, and fire, pre-Shakspearean in spirit, but showing touches of that hand which even in its apprentice years was capable of master-touches." Gervinus, who may be said to summarize German opinion, takes a similar view: "No piece," he writes, "is more adapted to the explanation of the manner in which Shakspeare, as soon as he was himself, did not write his dramatic works."† But the last word on this, as on so many other points of Shakspearean criticism, seems to me to rest with Coleridge, who says:

"Read aloud in any two or three passages in blank verse even from Shakspeare's earliest dramas, as *Love's Labour Lost* or *Romeo and Juliet*; and then read in the same way this (opening) speech with special attention to the metre; and, if you do not feel the impossibility of the latter having been written by Shakspeare, all I dare suggest is, that

* *Outlines* (ed. 1883) p. 89.

† *Commentaries*, p. 114.

you may have ears—for so has another animal—but an ear you cannot have, *me judice.*" (*Literary Remains* ii, p. 184.)

Hallam, not without hesitation, ascribed the authorship of the *First Part* to Greene; others find evidence of more than one hand, of Marlowe and Peele, of Lodge and Nash, in addition to Greene. Discussion of such points is, however, beyond the scope of the present book and the competence of the present writer. It must suffice to record the prevailing judgment that this *First Part* was merely touched, and very lightly touched, by Shakspeare, though he undoubtedly treated it as an historical prologue to the *Second* and *Third Parts.*

The latter stand on an altogether different footing from *Part I.* They represent, beyond reasonable question, Shakspeare's revision of earlier plays. *Henry VI*, Part II, is a careful revision of a play first printed in 1594, and reprinted in 1660.* This play is entitled,

" The first fact of the contention betwixt the two famous Houses of York and Lancaster, with the death of good Duke Humphrey: and the banishment and death of the Duke of Suffolk and the tragicall end of the proud Cardinall of Winchester, with the notable rebellion of Jacke Cade and the Duke of York's first claime unto the Crowne " (1594).

Henry VI, Part III, is similarly adapted from:

" The true tragedie of Richard, Duke of York,

* The Bodleian Library possses a copy of each of these editions.

and the death of good King Henrie the Sixt with the whole contention between the two Houses of Lancaster and Yorke as it was sundrie times acted by the Right Honourable the Earl of Pembroke his servants" (1595).*

In the writing of both these plays there is little doubt that Marlowe had, at least, a hand, though Swinburne finds proof "irresistible and unmistakeable" of at least a double authorship and declares that, while Shakspeare "deftly touched" Marlowe's work, he "heavily corrected" the "other's" work. How many "other" hands there were, whether Greene's was the chief hand, whether he only contributed to Marlowe's work, whether Lodge and Peele also had their share in it, are matters of conjecture which it is foreign to my purpose to pursue. Enough to say that in Parts II and III of *Henry VI* as we have them to-day, Shakspeare undoubtedly had a very considerable share. The nature and extent of Shakspeare's corrections to the earlier plays can be seen at a glance in Professor Henry Morley's edition, where Shakspeare's emendations are underlined.

Whatever conclusion critics may reach as to the authorship of the plays, there is no obscurity as to the source from which the authors derived their material. Holinshed supplied it throughout, and in many parts Holinshed's chronicle is versified with the least possible verbal alteration. It should, however, be added that as regards historical events, unusual liberties are taken. There is not only the usual

* Both these plays have been reprinted, with an introduction by Halliwell-Phillipps, in Hazlitt's Shakspeare's Library, Part II, vols. ii and iii.

compression and foreshortening of events, essential to any dramatic presentation of history, but there are anachronisms and, indeed, compound anachronisms without end. Thus in Joan's appeal to the Duke of Burgundy the release of the Duke of Orleans is ante-dated by several years; the Coronation of Henry VI, here represented as taking place after the death of Bedford and the defection of Burgundy in fact took place many years before; there is confusion again between two Earls of Warwick: Richard Beauchamp, who died in 1439, and his brother-in-law Richard Neville, the "King-maker"; the motives of Cade's rebellion, too, are entirely misrepresented, being drawn, as we shall see, from the historical accounts, not of Cade's rising under Henry VI, but that of Wat the Tyler under Richard II. Still, in the main, Holinshed is faithfully followed.

The action of the three Parts extends in all over nearly half a century: from the funeral of Henry V, in 1422, to the death of Henry VI in 1471. Of this period nearly half is assigned to Part I, which carries us from the accession of the infant Henry of Windsor (1422) down to his marriage with Margaret of Anjou in 1445.

Of this period and this Part little need be said. Both historically and dramatically it is dull. If Part I has a hero he must, I suppose, be found in the character of John Talbot, Earl of Shrewsbury, the last English Viceroy of Aquitaine, and still commemorated in that district as Le Roi Talabot.* The memory of Talbot, as the last of the great captains of the

* Ramsay ii, 156.

Hundred Years' War, was still green in Elizabethan England, and his death at Chatillon, together with that of his young son, "My Icarus, my blossom," was an effective incident, not ineffectively handled by the dramatist. Of the presentation of the Maid of Orleans more must be said presently.

Historically, the main interest of the period covered by Part I is to be found in the indications, not obscure, of the portended outbreak of civil war and the downfall of the Lancastrian dynasty, actually consummated in Parts II and III. The downfall of the dynasty was due essentially to the convergent operation of several important factors. Of these not the least important was the breakdown of the constitutional experiment with the trial of which the Lancastrian House is historically identified*. Closely connected with this was the position assumed by the Baronage, and the revival of a "bastard" feudalism—a perverted form of an institution which, in its legitimate form and in an appropriate age, had not lacked ample justification. The intermarriage of the members of the leading Baronial families had at once diminished their numbers and vastly increased the extent of their territorial appanages. The great barons had become, therefore, immensely rich, and immensely powerful; the Crown was relatively poor and weak. The radical change introduced by Edward III into the military system: the abandonment of the feudal levy, the raising of regiments of volunteers by indentures entered into between the Crown and the

* Supra, p. 130.

great lords, had contributed to the same end.* On their return from the French wars the Barons found themselves at the head of armed bands of men who had followed them into the field and who, on the restoration of peace, were disinclined to settle down into civil life ; who preferred to accept the " livery " of their " lords " and to rely upon their protection (" maintenance ") for immunity from the legal consequences of any depredations which they might commit. The constant petitions presented by the Knights of the Shire against the increasingly prevalent practice of *Livery and Maintenance* afford eloquent testimony to the inconveniences—to use no harsher word—thus inflicted upon peaceable folk.

One of Suffolk's men boasted that " his lord was able to keep daily in his house more men than his adversary had hairs on his head," and in 1406 the Commons " complained that baronets, knights and esquires gave liveries of cloth to as many as three hundred men or more to uphold their unjust quarrels, and in order to be able to oppress others at their pleasure, and no remedy could be had against them because of their confederacy and maintenance."† All through the Lancastrian period these complaints were reiterated.

Constant efforts were made to put an end to the scandal by legislation, but the futility of the remedy was equalled only by its frequency. Closely connected with the change in the military system and with the custom of livery is the increasing prevalence

* Cf. Oman (*Warwick the King-maker*, p. 36), who prints a typical *indenture* of 1449, and points to the practice as one of the symptoms of the social unrest which reached a climax in the Wars of the Roses.

† Plummer: *Fortescue*, p. 27.

of private wars. Noble fought noble: the Earl of Westmoreland was constantly at war with the Earl of Northumberland; the Earl of Devon with Lord Bonneville; the men of Cheshire invaded Salop; the King's tenants of Knaresborough Forest were at war with Archbishop Kemp's tenants at Ripon; the students of Oxford University with the men of the county; and so on. Worse still, the bastard feudalism infected the administration of justice. The Paston correspondence teems with instances of the intimidation of juries, the bribery of sheriffs, even the corruption of the judges. "Nothing," writes Mr. Plummer, "is more curious than the way in which it is assumed that it is idle to indict a criminal who is maintained by a powerful person; that it is useless to institute legal proceedings unless the sheriff and jury can be secured beforehand; nothing can be more naïve than the complaints as to the difficulty of being sure of jurymen, because they are 'ambidexter,' *i.e.*, take bribes from both sides, or they fear a 'turning world,' *i.e.*, some sudden change in the relations of parties. Very quaint, too, is the astonishment expressed by John Paston, *not* at being attacked in an unprovoked manner at the door of Norwich Cathedral, so much as at being attacked by a dependant of the Duke of Norfolk, who was his 'good lord'; for it is evidently regarded as a great scandal to a lord that two of his dependants should be at feud. Bribes are offered and looked for as a matter of course; it is assumed that an officer will use his official position in favour of his friends, and the only hope of redressing evils is considered to lie in the influence of the great."*

Apart from social disorder and the paralysis of the arm of the law, there were other causes operating to the disadvantage of the Lancastrian House. Among these, two were particularly fatal: the deep-seated differences among the Lancastrian partisans at home, and the disastrous failure which ultimately attended their ambitious policy abroad.

Part I clearly reveals both these causes at work. Hardly was the body of Henry V laid to rest before Bedford had to interfere to rebuke and restrain the quarrels between his brother, Gloucester, and their uncle, Henry Beaufort, Bishop of Winchester:

"Cease, cease these jars, and rest your minds in peace."

Gloucester had been nominated as Regent of England by Henry V; he held that office at the time of his brother's death, and was confirmed in it by his will. A more obvious and much safer appointment would have been that of John, Duke of Bedford, but Bedford was nominated as Regent of France and Normandy, and bidden to carry on the enterprise nearest to his brother's heart. The personal guardianship of the young King was confided, however, not to Gloucester, but to Thomas Beaufort, Duke of Exeter. The latter appointment would seem to indicate that Henry V did not entirely trust Gloucester, and the Lords of the Council trusted him still less. They ultimately agreed that during Bedford's absence in France, Gloucester should be

* Plummer: Introduction to Fortescue's *Governance of England*, p. 29.

"Protector of the Realm and King's Chief Counsellor"; but they specifically repudiated the implied claim of the late King to dispose of the government after his death; they held that Gloucester had no claim to the regency on the ground of relationship, and they refused to give him the title of Regent or of Lieutenant-Governor. That "Good Duke Humphrey" enjoyed a certain measure of popularity with the trading classes and with the populace at large cannot be denied, but those who knew him best trusted him least. His persistent hostility to the Beauforts at home, and the embarrassment caused to Bedford by his selfish and unpatriotic policy abroad, must be regarded as among the many causes which contributed to the downfall of the Lancastrians. The University of Oxford has just cause to cherish his memory, and the general unpopularity of his opponents conferred upon him a spurious reputation among contemporaries, but it is impossible to justify either on public or private grounds the epithet which is traditionally associated with his name.

Ambitious, self-seeking, impetuous and autocratic, Gloucester, though a Lancastrian in blood, never understood the peculiar conditions under which the Lancastrian dynasty held the English throne, still less, perhaps, the conditions upon which alone they could hope to retain a precarious hold upon France.

His brother John, Duke of Bedford, was a very different man. A true Lancastrian in temper and tradition; a cautious diplomatist; a good general; above all, a real patriot, Bedford was under no illusions as to the political situation either in France

or in England. To keep in check the dangerous vagaries of Duke Humphrey, Bedford was forced to rely mainly upon their uncle, Henry Beaufort, Bishop of Winchester, and afterwards Cardinal and Papal Legate. Beaufort was the typical statesman-ecclesiastic: wholly secular in outlook; enormously wealthy and foolishly ostentatious; overbearing in temper and greedy of power, but withal a true patriot, anxious only to devote himself and his wealth to the service of the State, and thoroughly imbued with the constitutional principles for which, and by which, the Lancastrians stood. He quoted to Parliament in 1410 the dictum attributed to Aristotle: "The supreme security and safeguard of every kingdom and city is to have the entire and cordial love of the people and to keep them in their law and rights." The quotation, even if apocryphal, was entirely consonant with Lancastrian doctrine. But despite, or perhaps by reason of his constitutional orthodoxy, Beaufort never enjoyed a tithe of Gloucester's popularity. By the people he was regarded as a self-seeking adventurer, an ultramontane ecclesiastic, and a greedy usurer. Only in Parliament were his real aims and character understood. Between Beaufort and Gloucester there were perpetual dissensions, and once or twice Bedford was compelled to leave his work in France to attempt to allay them. These quarrels, it is needless to add, had a disastrous effect upon the fortunes of the House to which both Princes belonged.

In France the decay of those fortunes was temporarily arrested by the vigour and skill of Duke John, but the task bequeathed to him by Henry V

was, in truth, beyond his powers or the powers of any man. The protracted war against the Angevin Kings of England was doing the work of the Valois Kings of France. What the secular struggle against the Moors was to the Spanish people, the Hundred Years War with England was to the French. The spirit of national unity and national identity was gradually evoked. The sentiment was carefully nurtured by the persistent policy of the French Kings, but even their policy could hardly have prevailed save for the presence of the English upon French soil. The English position depended almost entirely upon the Burgundian alliance. That alliance was confirmed by Bedford's marriage in 1423 with a sister of Duke Philip, but all the fruits of Bedford's prudence were dissipated by the headstrong policy of Gloucester, who in the same year married Jacqueline of Hainault, a wealthy heiress whose inheritance was claimed by the Duke of Burgundy.

But the final blow to the English position in France was dealt not by the selfishness of Gloucester but by the purity and patriotism of La Pucelle. The delineation in this play of the character of Joan of Arc follows the lines which had become traditional with the English chroniclers. To them, as Charles Knight has said, the Maid of Orleans was " a mere virago, a bold and shameless trull, a monster, a witch." Whether Shakspeare would have broken away from this tradition is doubtful, but it is good to be assured that this grotesque travesty did not receive his imprimatur. The first Act of the Play, apart from the dissensions between the Lancastrian princes, is mainly concerned with the recovery of

the French, under the impulse derived from the Maid, and ends with the raising of the siege of Orleans. In succeeding Acts the fortunes of war sway backwards and forwards, but on the whole the English position becomes more and more desperate, and the fourth Act ends with the death of Talbot, "the Frenchman's only scourge," and the final defeat of the cause which he had done so much to sustain. These events belong historically to the year 1453, but the chronology of the whole of Part I is a hopeless tangle which it would serve no useful purpose to unravel. The sole significance of the play, in an historical sense, is to be found in the indications it affords of the perpetual quarrels between Gloucester and Beaufort, and still more the dispute between Richard Plantagenet (afterwards Duke of York) on the one hand and, on the other, John Beaufort, Earl, and afterwards Duke of Somerset, and William de la Pole, Earl of Suffolk (Act II, Scene 4). The latter scene, which takes place in the Temple Gardens, is, as we have seen, the only portion of the play which is by general consent attributed to Shakspeare. There is, so far as I am aware, no historical warrant for the particular incidents therein described, but it gives, in picturesque form, an account of the origin of the symbols, the White Rose and the Red, by which the rival parties in the civil war were subsequently distinguished. The scene immediately precedes an account of the death of "Mortimer" —Edmund II Earl of March—which, in historical fact, occurred some four years before the appearance of Joan of Arc, and not at the Tower, but in Ireland. The rights of Mortimer devolved upon Richard

Plantagenet, whom in the preceding scene we have seen in dispute with the Lancastrian partisans, Suffolk and Somerset. Thus the play does prepare us, though in strangely confused fashion, for the outbreak of the civil wars. It closes with the celebration of the marriage between the young King Henry VI and Margaret of Anjou, the daughter of René, Duke of Bar and Lorraine (1443).

This marriage was the work of the Beauforts, and in more ways than one was singularly ill-advised. The bride, though fair, was portionless, and the marriage meant the final abandonment of the Burgundian alliance on which the English position in France depended. It meant also, as we shall see, the cession of Anjou and Maine, while, in domestic politics, it involved the Lancastrians in a coil from which they never escaped.

The Second Part of *Henry VI* opens with the arrival of Queen Margaret, under the escort of Suffolk. Almost immediately the disgraceful terms of the marriage treaty imposed upon Suffolk are disclosed. Against those terms Gloucester promptly protests :

> " O peers of England, shameful is this league !
> Fatal this marriage ! cancelling your fame,
> . . . . . .
> Defacing monuments of conquer'd France,
> Undoing all, as all had never been ! "

Bitter feuds manifest themselves among the great nobles, and begin to assume a dynastic colour. Before the first scene closes we see the Yorkist

party already in process of formation ; York himself, though strongly opposed to premature action, reveals his ambitions in soliloquy :

" A day will come when York shall claim his own ;
And therefore will I take the Nevil's parts,
And make a show of love to proud Duke Humphrey,
And when I spy advantage, claim the crown,
For that's the golden mark I seek to hit :
Nor shall proud Lancaster usurp my right,
Nor hold the sceptre in his childish fist,
Nor wear the diadem upon his head,
Whose church-like humours fits not for a crown.
Then, York, be still awhile, till time do serve :
. . . . . .
Then will I raise aloft the milk-white rose,
With whose sweet smell the air shall be perfum'd ;
And in my standard bear the arms of York,
To grapple with the House of Lancaster ;
And, force perforce, I'll make him yield the crown,
Whose bookish rule hath pull'd fair England down."

There is no skill here of versification, nor any subtlety of characterisation ; York's ambitions stand confessed ; the dullest of auditors cannot fail to apprehend them ; the coming catastrophe is, at the outset, plainly announced. This is all characteristic of Shakspeare's earliest manner. He has not yet mastered the niceties of his craft. He is still writing, as we should say, for a transpontine audience. The shades of expression must not be too fine. The sheep

must be very clearly discriminated from the goats. When a man is nice he must be " very, very nice " ; " when he's nasty " he must be " horrid."

The theme announced in the prelude is developed in the scenes that follow. A dramatic turn is given to the historical feuds between Yorkist and Lancastrian by connecting them with the personal rivalry of two ambitious women: Henry's Queen, Margaret of Anjou, and Eleanor Cobham, the second wife of Humphrey of Gloucester. That Duchess Eleanor spurred on the ambition of the Duke is likely enough, though the spur was hardly needed; but there is no historical warrant for the suggestion that Gloucester sought to restrain the overweening ambition of his wife. In his account of the gradual formation of the cabal against Duke Humphrey, Shakspeare has closely followed Holinshed, but Queen Margaret had no part whatever in the prosecution of Eleanor Cobham. The arrest of the Duchess took place in 1441; Margaret of Anjou did not arrive in England until four years afterwards—in 1445. Nevertheless, here as always, despite what dryasdust would describe as historical inaccuracy, Shakspeare shows himself true to the essential verities of the historical situation. He wanted to exhibit Henry's French Queen as a high-spirited, proud and courageous woman, but yet as the evil genius of the Lancastrian House. That is the exact historical truth. Mrs. Jameson is too jealous for her sex to allow her to admit the accuracy of the portrait; or rather, she is more concerned to repudiate the artist. " Margaret of Anjou as exhibited in these tragedies is a dramatic portrait of considerable truth, vigour

and consistency," she writes, "but she is not one of Shakspeare's women. . . The character . . has something of the power, but none of the flowing ease of Shakspeare's manner." If she had written of Shakspeare's *later* manner I should agree; but there is not much of "flowing ease" in any of the portraits drawn in these earlier *Histories*. The historical position of Queen Margaret is infallibly indicated in a few characteristically strong and pregnant sentences by Bishop Stubbs: "In Margaret, from the very moment of her arrival, was concentrated the weakness and the strength of the dynastic cause—its strength in her indomitable will, her steady faithfulness, her heroic defence of the rights of her husband and child; its weakness in her political position, her policy and her Ministers. To the nation she symbolised the loss of Henry V's conquests, an inglorious peace, the humiliation of the popular Gloucester, the promotion of the unpopular Beauforts."

This is the woman whom Shakspeare selects, and with ample historical warrant, as the political pivot of Parts II and III of *Henry VI.* So far, therefore, from repudiating, with Mrs. Jameson, the Shakspearian authorship, I take it as a very characteristic illustration of his dramatic insight and of his historical acumen that he should have thus, from the outset of the drama, have concentrated attention upon the character of the Queen. The workmanship, I allow, is immature, the colours are crude, the delineation lacks subtlety and *chiaroscuro*, but the outlines are typically bold and clear. The portrait of Queen Margaret seems to me to be not only true, reasonably

true, to history, but Shakspearean to the finger tips. Katharine of Aragon would never have expressed herself in regard to Anne Boleyn as did Queen Margaret of Eleanor Cobham :

" Not all these lords do vex me half so much
As that proud dame, the lord protector's wife."

But though the one portrait illustrates the very latest, and the other the very earliest, manner of the master, both are equally and unmistakeably Shakspearian.

Crudity of colour and draughtmanship is not confined to the delineation of Queen Margaret. We have already seen it exhibited in York ; we see it also in Eleanor Cobham :

" Were I a man," exclaims Eleanor, " a duke and next of blood,
I would remove these tedious stumbling blocks ;
And smooth my way upon their headless necks,
And, being a woman, I will not be slack
To play my part in Fortune's pageant."

Or observe the dramatic naiveté of the priest, John Hume :

" To be plain,
They knowing Dame Eleanor's aspiring humour,
Have hired me to undermine the Duchess,
And buzz these conjurations in her brain."

Shakspeare himself seems to parody this, his earlier method, in *A Midsummer Night's Dream.*

But to return to the progress of the drama. Amid all the bickering and intrigue of bad women and the clashing ambitions of self-seeking men, there moves the pathetic figure of the poor, spiritless, ineffective but saintly King. His part in the drama, like his place in history (save for the ever memorable foundation of Eton and King's Colleges), was wholly negative. But even in politics pure negation may not be devoid of pathos. Again to Bishop Stubbs we go for the complete portrait in a few lines: "Weak in health . . . and precocious rather than strong in mind, he was overworked from his childhood; and the overwork telling upon a frame in which the germs of hereditary insanity [of course, on his mother's side] already existed, broke down both mind and body, at the most critical period of his reign. Henry was perhaps the most unfortunate King that ever reigned . . . and he was without doubt most innocent of all the evils that befell England because of him." The critical historian does but confirm the impression of the shrewd dramatist. Pious, amiable and ineffective; such was the son of one of the strongest and most martial of our Kings; the son, we should rather say, as most sons are, of his mother, Princess Katharine of France.

Opposed to the intrigues of the Queen and the weakness of the King, we have the prudence and vigour of the Duke of York, and the lightly earned popularity of the "good Duke" Humphrey of Gloucester. Before the second Act closes the former has set forth with great precision and in minute detail his title to the Crown. "My lord," says

Salisbury, "I long to hear it at full." It is impossible either for the ordinary reader or auditor to share Salisbury's polite curiosity, and students of genealogy may, therefore, be referred to Appendix III. Even the patience of York's auditors was at length exhausted :

"My lord," says Salisbury, "break off; we know
your mind at full."

But it is clear that the wearisome recital had attained its immediate purpose :

WARWICK :

"My heart assures me that the Earl of Warwick
Shall one day make the Duke of York a king."

YORK :

"And, Nevil, this I do assure myself,—
Richard shall live to make the Earl of Warwick
The greatest man in England but the King."

But the first enemy to be destroyed was Gloucester. His Duchess, vain and superstitious, destroyed herself. Against Duke Humphrey—the darling of the mob—the Queen must needs proceed more warily. Immediately after the arrest of the Duchess, the Duke was dismissed from the Protectorship :

"Give up thy staff: Henry will to himself
Protector be; and God shall be my hope,
My stay, my guide, and lantern to my feet."

In historical fact Gloucester had ceased to be Protector fourteen or fifteen years before, in 1431; in the play his dismissal is represented as being brought about by the influence of Queen Margaret. Her triumph is, for the moment, complete:

"Why, now is Henry King and Margaret Queen!"

In the next Act (III) the plot against Gloucester thickens. The Queen, Suffolk, York, and Cardinal Beaufort are at one in desiring to be rid of him wholly and for ever. The gentle King:

"Bewails good Gloster's case
With sad unhelpful tears; and with dimm'd eyes
Looks after him, and cannot do him good."

Gloucester's enemies, if not numerous, are powerful; they accuse him of high treason and he is committed, despite the gentle protest of the King, to the custody of the Cardinal. The end is not delayed. Forthwith comes a report:

"That good Duke Humphrey traitorously is murder'd
By Suffolk and the Cardinal Beaufort's means."

Great is the indignation of the populace, who instinctively fix the guilt upon Suffolk. The facts are still wrapped in obscurity. Polydore Vergil asserts that Gloucester was strangled. "All indifferent persons," says Holinshed, "might well understand that he died of some violent death." Shakspeare follows the tradition adopted by Holinshed. Bishop

Stubbs is more cautious, and, under reservation, sums up as follows: "On the whole, the evidence, both of direct statement and of silence among contemporary writers, tends to the belief that Gloucester's death was owing to natural causes, probably to a stroke of paralysis." On the evidence a coroner's jury would, we may suppose, have found an open verdict.

In the play Gloucester's death is followed immediately by the banishment and murder of Suffolk, and that again by the death of Cardinal Beaufort. For Shakspeare's account—his horrible account—of the Cardinal's death I am not aware that there is a tittle of historical evidence. On the contrary, Beaufort died, as he had lived, with the utmost decorum and (the apt phrase is Stubbs's) "business-like dignity." According to the play, he died in pangs of agony and remorse for his share in the murder of Gloucester. "So bad a death argues," Warwick is made to say, "a monstrous life." His life was far from monstrous. For half a century he was one of the stoutest pillars of the State, and in particular of the Lancastrian House. He understood, as Gloucester never did, the conditions upon which they had been called to the throne, and upon which they retained it. He appreciated perfectly the delicate nature of the constitutional experiment for which, and by which, they stood. If he failed to perceive that the experiment was premature: that social development lagged hopelessly behind the overgrowth of parliamentary government; that the nation at large was not yet ready to take upon itself the responsibilities which such a *régime* implies; that the prevailing disorder

demanded a stronger hand than can reasonably be expected from a parliamentary executive; in fine, that a people must learn to walk before they can hope to run—this can hardly be imputed for blame to Beaufort. He was a Lancastrian to the core, and the last hope of the dynasty went with him into a grave that was far from dishonoured.

Beaufort was not a great churchman, except in the sense attached to churchmanship in the fifteenth century; but he was indubitably a great politician, perhaps even a great statesman. "For fifty years," as the great historian-ecclesiastic has justly said: "Beaufort had held the strings of English policy, and had done his best to maintain the welfare and honour of the nation. That he was ambitious, secular, little troubled with scruples, apt to make religious persecution a substitute for religious life and conversation; that he was imperious, impatient of control, ostentatious and greedy of honour;—these are faults which weigh very lightly against a great politician, if they be all that can be said against him."* It is upon the qualities of imperiousness and ostentation that the dramatist has seized, and it is difficult not to resist the suspicion that in thus delineating the character of Beaufort, Shakspeare had in mind another Cardinal, greater than Beaufort as a politician, and much more imperious and ostentatious. It has been said of the first Duke of Marlborough that just as he was reaching the topmost rung of the ladder the shadow of Cromwell fell darkly across the path of his ambition. May it not be said that the recent memory of the less amiable qualities of Anne

* Stubbs: *Constitutional History*, iii, 139.

Boleyn's enemy led Shakspeare to lay on the darker shades with a heavier brush when he was painting the portrait of the great statesman-ecclesiastic of the preceding century? Anne Boleyn's daughter would not be slow to mark and appreciate the dexterous touch.

Less interest attaches to the death or to the life of Beaufort's connection by marriage, the Duke of Suffolk. His banishment and death follow, in the play, immediately upon the discovery of Gloucester's "murder." Dramatically the connexion between the two events is abundantly justified; historically they were separated by an interval of three years.* That Suffolk was murdered and that the murder was very deliberately planned is certain; the motives which inspired the crime are most obscure. It may have been the work of Yorkist partisans; it may have been due to the popular prejudice which connected Suffolk with the supposed murder of "good Duke Humphrey," or to the more justifiable belief that he was primarily responsible for the Anjou marriage and for the humiliations suffered by English arms in France; or perhaps to the offence he had given to the fleet. Perhaps all these motives were operative; or again the murder may merely have been a conspicuous illustration of the general impotence of the Lancastrian executive and the prevailing sense of insecurity. We cannot tell; but we do know that he was sentenced to five years' banishment as from May 1st, 1450; that he sailed from Dover on April 30th; that the boat by which he sailed was intercepted, clearly by design, and that on May 2nd he

* Gloucester died in 1447; Suffolk was murdered in 1450.

was murdered by the crew of the intercepting boat. That the Queen was devoted to him there is no doubt; but there is no evidence that he was her lover. Still the mere fact of her notorious partiality may be sufficient to account for the murder. A friend of the Queen was, in popular estimation, an enemy of the country.

Further evidence of the prevailing temper was afforded by the insurrection of Jack Cade, to the description of which the Fourth Act of the play is devoted.

Two points deserve, in this connection, passing notice: the nature and motives of the rebellion, and the character of its leader.

As to the former one thing is clear. Shakspeare's description of Cade and his rebellion would be reasonably accurate if applied to the insurrection of Wat the Tyler, in the early years of Richard II. Why Shakspeare resorted to this curious inversion of historical facts it is impossible to say and difficult to imagine. With Holinshed before him he cannot have confused the two risings; the inversion must have been deliberate, but the motive for it is undeniably obscure. Regret it we cannot, for it has given us one of the finest impressionist portraits of the crafty, loud-voiced demagogue and the self-seeking communist ever painted by the hand of a master. Before considering it in detail, a word must be said as to the nature of the insurrection led by Jack Cade. Whether that insurrection was or was not instigated by the Duke of York was and remains, uncertain. York himself was at the moment in Ireland, whither to his great delight, he had been

despatched to quell a revolt in that country (*Cf.* Act III, Scene 1). But whether York was directly concerned in Cade's rebellion or not, there can be no question that the programme of the rebels coincided with his own, and was conceived in the interests of his house. In that programme there was nothing of the communism which characterised the peasant revolt of 1381. There was, it is true, a demand for the repeal of the Statues of Labourers and a complaint of sundry extortions, but the demands were for the most part such as would have come not from peasants but from politicians. The insurgents complained of the alienation of Crown lands and demanded their resumption; they complained of the non-payment of the King's debts; of the tyranny and corruption of the underlings of the Court; of the general breakdown of the administration; the failure to obtain justice in the Courts; the interference of great nobles in the election of Knights of the Shire; the loss of the King's lands in France through "treason" and so forth. What they wanted was, as a modern historian has said, "administrative reform and a change of ministry."* All Suffolk's "false progeny and affinity" were to be dismissed and punished, and York, "late exiled from our lord's presence," was to be recalled at once. For the purposes of drama, Shakspeare may have deemed all this unsuitable. Wat the Tyler would serve his purposes better than Jack Cade. Let their parts, therefore, be inverted. Of the historical Jack Cade little is known. He would seem to have had some military experience, but where

* Sir James Ramsay: *op. cit.* II, p. 126.

he got it none can tell ; his followers were not mere ragamuffins : among them were men of substance, yeomen and even squires ; after his defeat he would seem to have accepted the King's profferred pardon, and that he was ultimately slain by Iden, the sheriff, there is a general concurrence of testimony. But the Cade of history, though a significant symptom of the lack of governance which distinguished the reign of Henry VI, is a relatively unimportant person. The Cade of Shakspeare is a priceless creation.

To argue, therefore, as the manner of some is, that Shakspeare's whole outlook upon politics was " conservative " and oligarchical, would seem to be an exaggerated inference ; but it is clear enough, (nor does the conclusion rest only upon *Henry VI*) that Shakspeare had little enthusiasm for mob-politics and held the mere demagogue in supreme contempt. The great speech of Ulysses already quoted defines his attitude with sufficient exactitude. Like most Englishmen of his day he accepted the firm rule of the Tudors as a welcome relief after the social anarchy which marked the middle years of the fifteenth century. Despotism he disliked as much as he despised demagogism. He clung, in politics as in ethics, to the golden mean; to the ordered self-government for which the Tudor dictatorship was so surely preparing the way.

In Cade we have a portrait, drawn with almost savage truth, of the mob-orator, the professional agitator, the half-deceived and wholly-deceiving leader of purposeless revolution.

From the conversation of George Bevis and John Holland we may see how the way is prepared :

GEORGE: "I tell thee, Jack Cade, the clothier mean, to dress the Commonwealth, and turn it and set a new nap upon it."

JOHN: "So he had need, for 'tis threadbare. Well, I say it was never merry in England since gentlemen came up."

GEORGE: "O miserable age! virtue is not regarded in handicraftsmen."

"JOHN: The nobility think scorn to go in leather aprons."

GEORGE: "Nay, more, the King's Council are no good workmen."

JOHN: "True; and yet it is said—labour is thy vocation; which is as much to say as—let the magistrates be labouring men; and, therefore, should we be magistrates."

GEORGE: "Thou hast hit it; for there's no better sign of a brave mind than a hard hand."

Then Cade himself appears, fertile in promises of material benefits: "There shall be in England seven half-penny loaves sold for a penny; the three-hooped pot shall have ten hoops; and I will make it felony to drink small beer; all the realm shall be in common, and in Cheapside shall my palfrey go to grass; and when I am King—as King I will be—there shall be no money; all shall eat and drink on my score; and I will apparel them all in one livery that they may agree like brothers and worship me their lord. . . . Away, burn all the records of the realm; my mouth shall be the parliament of England."

Lord Say is arraigned before him, and is thus harangued by Cade :

" I am the besom that must sweep the Court clean of such filth as thou art. Thou hast most traitorously corrupted the youth of the realm in erecting a grammar school . . . thou hast caused printing to be used, and, contrary to the King, his crown and dignity, thou hast built a paper mill." Shakspeare's Cade may correspond but loosely with the Cade of history, but he is eternally true to the demagogue of real life.

No sooner was the Cade rebellion crushed and his followers dispersed than there comes the news that York is returned from Ireland :

" And with a puissant and a mighty power
Of savage gallowglasses and stout kerns
Is marching hitherward in proud array."

According to the messenger, his intent was only to remove Somerset from the Council. York himself tells, in soliloquy, another tale ; it is the crown at which he aims. Historically, the messenger may have been nearer the truth. The situation need not have involved, in modern phrase, anything more than a ministerial crisis : the substitution of York for Somerset as Prime Minister. That it did, in fact, issue in a dynastic revolution was due to several reasons : primarily to the blind partisanship of the Queen ; partly to the birth in 1453 of a Prince of Wales ; partly to the King's inconvenient recovery from an attack of insanity. There is reason to believe that if Queen Margaret could, after Suffolk's death, have reconciled herself to the appointment of York as first

adviser to the King; if she could have forgone for a moment her persistent partisanship; if no heir had been born to the Lancastrian House, York would have been satisfied with the position of *de facto* regent for the time, with the prospect of succession to the throne on the death of the weakly and half-imbecile King.

But, as in 1688, the birth of an heir to King Henry and Queen Margaret reduced the "opposition" to despair and precipitated a crisis which might otherwise have been averted. As things were, only the sword could decide the issue. To arms York appealed, and in 1455, at the first battle of St. Albans, Somerset was killed and King Henry captured. This battle was, as Stubbs says, only a half-hour skirmish, but "it sealed the fate of the Kingdom." With this battle the ~~First~~ Part of *Henry VI* concludes, and the ~~Second~~ Part opens.

The ~~Second~~ Part carries on the tale of the Civil Wars, without break, though in highly concentrated form. From the first battle at St. Albans (1455) it takes us rapidly on to the battle of Northampton (July, 1460), when the Yorkists were again victorious. After his victory at Northampton, York put forward a formal claim to the throne and his right to the succession was recognized by Parliament. In December of the same year, however, the tables were turned at Wakefield, the Lancastrians were victorious, York was captured and slain. Whether he fell in battle or was afterwards beheaded is doubtful. The author of the play adopting the latter view takes advantage of it to exhibit the exultant Queen in a peculiarly repulsive light.

During the early part of 1461 the fortunes of the war swayed uncertainly from side to side. In February, Edward, York's eldest son, defeated Jasper Tudor, Earl of Pembroke, half-brother to Henry VI, at Mortimer's Cross, in Herefordshire, but on the 17th of the same month Queen Margaret defeated Warwick at the second battle of St. Albans, and released her husband from captivity. But her triumph was shortlived. The Londoners were keen supporters of the Yorkist cause; Edward of York came to London, and on June 29th, 1461, was crowned at Westminster; the victories of Ferrybridge and Towton confirmed the choice of the capital; and before the close of the year King Henry VI, Queen Margaret and the little Prince of Wales were all fugitives in Scotland. The Queen, with all her unpleasing qualities, had one supreme virtue: she never knew when she was beaten. In 1464 she made another bold bid for her husband's throne, but she was decisively defeated at Hedgeley Moor and Hexham, and in July of the following year Henry VI was again captured, and for the next five years was kept in close confinement.

The position of Edward IV might now seem to be fairly established. His unhappy rival was a prisoner in the Tower; Queen Margaret and her son were fugitives in France; all the leading Lancastrian partisans were dispersed or killed. But the new King had already committed a blunder which gravely imperilled all that he won. He owed his throne, generally to the weakness and unpopularity of the rival dynasty, but immediately to the fine generalship and immense political influence of the most powerful of his subjects,

Richard Neville, Earl of Warwick, well named the "King-maker." "For certanly ther may no grettir perell growe to a prince than to have a subgett equepolent to hymself." Thus wrote the most acute political observer of that day, Sir John Fortescue, in his treatise, *De Monarchia.* Written as a warning to his young pupil, Henry VI, Fortescue's words found their most conspicuous illustration in the career of the "King-maker." The baronage of the fifteenth century was, owing to a variety of circumstances, curiously depleted in numbers. Heirs male failed in many houses, and the remainder mated, as a rule, with great heiresses. The result was an immense concentration of landed property; manor was added to manor, and even shire to shire. Of this tendency the Nevilles were the greatest examples. The position of Warwick, the head of the house was, in a territorial sense, far greater than that of the Kings whom he made and unmade. One of his brothers was Warden of the Scottish Marches, another was Archbishop of York; his eldest daughter, Isabel, was married to George, Duke of Clarence, the younger brother of the Yorkist King; his second daughter, Anne, wedded Edward, Prince of Wales, the heir to the Lancastrian House.

This was the man of whom Edward IV was foolish enough to make an enemy. Warwick was not merely a great territorial baron, the man who daily feasted more than thirty thousand companions and retainers; he was not merely a successful soldier; he was an ambitious statesman and a shrewd, calculating diplomatist. The one thing needed to consolidate the Yorkist position at home was, in his judgment,

an alliance with France, the consistent supporter of the Lancastrian claims. To France accordingly Warwick was despatched, in 1464, to seek for his master an alliance, political and matrimonial. The matter was satisfactorily arranged; Louis XI was well content to give the reigning King of England the hand of his sister-in-law, the Lady Bona of Savoy, in marriage.

The dramatic effect is legitimately heightened by bringing on to the scene, at this juncture, the fugitive Queen Margaret and her son. To the Queen the conclusion of this alliance between the French and English Kings meant the destruction of her last hope:

> "Deceitful Warwick—it was thy device
> By this alliance to make void my suit:
> Before thy coming Louis was Henry's friend."

Hardly was the bargain sealed when there arrived post haste from England a messenger bearing the astounding news that in Warwick's absence in France King Edward had fallen a victim to the charms of Elizabeth Woodville, the widow of Grey, Lord Ferrers, and had forthwith made her his wife.

The blow to Warwick was double-edged. To his prestige as an ambassador it was a deadly insult; to his ambition as a statesman a cruel blow. In an instant the edifice of his carefully calculated diplomacy fell about his ears like a house of cards. The project of the French alliance was Warwick's own. Edward IV has never been more than tepid in his enthusiasm, and for a good reason. Alliance with

France, then as often, meant enmity with the Low Countries. Of all the continental connections of England that with the Low Countries—with Flanders, Burgundy, the United Provinces, Belgium—has been incomparably the most constant and the most significant. From the days of William the Norman to those of King George V the English people have instinctively and consistently kept their eyes fixed upon the adjacent harbours of the Netherland coast. Not in covetousness. Annexation has never been in their minds; but sternly they have resolved that those harbours must never be controlled by one of the great continental powers. To maintain this principle Elizabeth fought Philip II; to secure the independence of the Low Countries William III was permitted to engage the forces of England against Louis XIV of France; had Napoleon not clung to Antwerp he need never, as he confessed, have gone to Elba, much less to St. Helena. The independence of the Low Countries has from age to age been one of the few fixed points of British foreign policy.

In the latter part of the fifteenth century there was a fair chance of realizing that dream of a strong 'middle kingdom,' which has fascinated the minds of European statesmen from the days of Charlemagne to those of Castlereagh. Hence the antagonism between Louis XI of France and Duke Charles the Bold of Burgundy. The friend of Louis must needs be the enemy of Charles. For domestic and dynastic reasons the "King-maker" inclined to an alliance with France; the King, more true to English tradition, more heedful of the wishes of the London

merchants, favoured the Burgundian connection. There was something to be said on both sides; the bright eyes of Elizabeth Woodville clinched the matter. Edward threw over his ambassador, drove his most powerful subject into bitter opposition, flung Warwick and the Nevilles into the arms of the Lancastrians, and temporarily lost his throne:

"Tell him from me that he hath done me wrong,
And therefore I'll uncrown him ere't be long."

Such was Warwick's plain, albeit unpoetical, message to his King.

Historical events are much foreshortened for dramatic purposes. In historical fact Edward's marriage and Warwick's embassy both belong to the year 1464. Not until six years later did Warwick and Clarence fly to France and become reconciled, through the interposition of Louis XI, to the late Queen Margaret and the Lancastrian party. Once more Warwick was minded to play the "Kingmaker." From France the Lancastrian venture was launched; the expedition landed at Dartmouth; Edward and his brother, Gloucester, fled to Burgundy; his Queen sought sanctuary at Westminster; and the triumphant Warwick put Henry VI once more upon the throne. According to the play, and to Holinshed, whose account is closely followed by Shakspeare, King Edward was taken prisoner by Warwick, committed to the custody of his brother, the Archbishop of York, at Middleham, made his escape, by the aid of Gloucester and Sir John Stanley, to Lynn, and thence fled to Flanders. But

it is neither needful nor possible to disentangle the confusion. Enough to note that in 1470 Edward did fly to Flanders and that Henry VI temporarily regained his crown. There is a pretty touch in the sixth scene of Act IV, which deserves a passing notice. The eyes of the restored King fell upon a lad in the Court circle, and was told in answer to an enquiry :

" My liege, it is young Henry Earl of Richmond."

Whereupon the King, laying his hand upon the boy's head, utters this prophetic hope :

" Come hither, England's hope. If secret powers
Suggest but truth to my divining thought,
This pretty lad will prove our country's bliss.
His looks are full of peaceful majesty ;
His head by nature fram'd to wear a crown,
His hand to wield a sceptre ; and himself
Likely in time to bless a regal throne."

Such a prophecy could not be displeasing to the lady who so strongly " favoured " her grandfather, and who occupied the throne which the sword of the " pretty lad " had won.

Meanwhile, events hurried on apace. Edward's exile was a brief one. Furnished with an adequate force by his brother-in-law, Duke Charles of Burgundy, he landed, as Henry IV had landed at Ravenspur, and, joined by his brother Clarence, a deserter from the Nevilles, he advanced rapidly on London. At Barnet (April 14th, 1471) he encountered and defeated the Lancastrian forces under

Warwick, Warwick himself fell in battle, so did his brother Montague ; Edward IV re-entered his capital in triumph (May 21st) ; King Henry was again committed to the Tower, and for twelve years (1471-1482) Edward reigned without a rival. Meanwhile Queen Margaret had crossed from France ; she landed, on the very day the battle of Barnet was fought, at Weymouth, and at Tewkesbury made her last bid for power (May 3rd). The day was disastrous for the Lancastrian cause : Margaret herself was taken prisoner ; her son, the young Prince Edward, was slain ; her principal supporters, Oxford and Somerset, were captured and afterwards beheaded.

On the day that Edward IV re-entered London Henry VI died in the Tower. In ascribing his death to the murderous hands of Gloucester, Shakspeare follows Holinshed, and common tradition. Whether rumour spoke true, whether Henry was really murdered or died a natural death we cannot tell. Walpole, in his *Historic Doubts*, is at pains to prove Gloucester's innocence, and Courtenay shares his scepticism ; Stubbs expresses a cautious opinion in favour of the view that Henry was murdered, but declines to say by whom. If murder there was, Edward must have been privy to it, but there is no evidence that the suspicion diminished in any way his popularity. The weakness of Henry VI had been from the first a perpetual source of misery for his people. Blameless as a man, incapable of harbouring an unkind thought, few Kings of England have wrought more evil to their country. But he was in truth the victim of circumstances. The times demanded a strong ruler. The Lancastrian period was marked

as the greatest of modern historians has observed, by the "trial and failure of a great constitutional experiment." To the modern student of political institutions the experiment is of transcendant interest. It throws a flood of light upon the conditions essential to the success of parliamentary government. Of those conditions the most indispensable is a highly developed sense of social solidarity and a unanimous determination at all costs to maintain social order; a second, hardly less indispensable, is, as Cromwell perceived, a general concurrence in the "fundamentals" of the Constitution. Neither condition was fulfilled in the England of the fifteenth century. A small knot of "advanced" politicians effected in 1399, as in 1688, an easy revolution; the country acquiesced. The obvious corollary of their success was the "Lancastrian experiment": an attempt to govern in and through Parliament. The experiment, triumphantly vindicated after the lapse of three centuries, was in the fifteenth century grotesquely inopportune. It failed not because it was in essence bad, but because it was premature. It was finally extinguished on the fields of Barnet and Tewkesbury. The House of Lancaster fell, in Fortescue's phrase, from "lack of governance." The Yorkists were now to get their chance. To what use they put it, the next chapter will show.

CHAPTER VII

THE YORKIST MONARCHY

THE TRAGEDY OF KING RICHARD THE THIRD

"The House of Lancaster had reigned constitutionally, but had fallen by lack of governance. The House of York followed, and although they ruled with a stronger will, failed altogether to remedy the evils to which they succeeded. . . . England learned a lesson from both, and owes a sort of debt to both: the rule of the House of Lancaster proved that the nation was not yet ready for the efficient use of the liberties it had won, and that of the House of York proved that the nation was too full grown to be fettered again with the bonds from which it had escaped."—STUBBS.

"I have no brother; I am like no brother,
And this word Love which grey-beards call divine
Be resident in men like one another,
And not in me—I am myself alone."

RICHARD III.

"Richard loves Richard; that is I am I."

RICHARD III.

"Il trompe les hommes pour se donner le plaisir de les mépriser. GUIZOT on RICHARD III.

RICHARD III takes up the tale at the point where it was dropped in the last scene of *Henry VI*, Part III. It carries it on from the death of Henry VI (May 21st, 1471) to the death of Richard III on Bosworth Field on August 22nd, 1485. Consequently it covers the twelve years of Edward's uninterrupted and undisputed reign (1471-1483); the reign of Edward V and that of Richard III. But though the period covered is an extended one, the whole action and interest of the drama is concentrated upon a single character. In this, as in other respects, the play betrays, as we shall see, the dominating influence which was at this period of his career exercised over the genius of Shakspeare by Christopher Marlowe. Swinburne has said that this is the only one of all Shakspeare's plays "which belongs absolutely to the school of Marlowe." Yet it is indisputably Shakspeare's. "It is a better piece of work than Marlowe ever did; I dare not say that Marlowe ever could have done."*

Before proceeding to discuss the play, to follow the brief but tempestuous career of its leading character, it may be desirable to dispose briefly of one or two critical questions. The date of composition can be fixed with certainty within narrow limits. The play is entered in the *Stationers' Register* under the date October, 20th, 1597. That fixes the inferior limit. But Professor Dowden, relying mainly upon internal evidence, declares that it can hardly be later in date than 1593. That brings it very near in order of composition to *Richard II.* Did it follow or precede that play? On the whole, the weight of critical

* *Op. cit.*, p. 43.

opinion inclines to the view that *Richard III* followed directly upon *Henry VI* and preceded *Richard II*, and that we must, therefore, accept *Richard III* as Henry Morley does as "the earliest historical play of which Shakspeare alone was the author." It contains, it is true, less rhyme than *Richard II*, but, on the other hand, the style, on the whole, is much more stilted and artificial; there are only about fifty lines of prose, and these are assigned wholly to the two murderers; the verse abounds with forced antitheses and strained conceits and there is a marked tendency to stichomythia; as, for instance, in this dialogue between King Richard and Queen Elizabeth:

R. Wrong not her birth [the Princess Elizabeth's], she is of royal blood.
E. To save her life I'll say she is not so.
R. Her life is safest only in her birth.
E. And only in that safety died her brothers.
R. Lo, at their births good stars were opposite.
E. No, to their lives bad friends were contrary.
R. All unavoided is the doom of destiny.
E. True, when avoided grace makes destiny.

This tendency to stichomythia is, however, one only of many signs of vigorous immaturity. The clinching and convincing proof of very early composition is, in my judgement, to be found in the characterisation. Never again did Shakspeare betray so palpably the influence of Marlowe. In *Richard III* there is no more subtlety of characterisation than there is in Marlowe's *Edward II* or his *Tamburlaine*

or his *Faustus*. In this respect the jump from *Richard III to Richard II*, still more to *Henry V*, is immense. In *Henry V*, for instance, we mark the gradual development of character; the subtle conflict between the impulses of headstrong youth and the promptings of policy and ambition. In *Richard II* we see the contrast between the posturing of the King and the essential weakness of the man; between Richard's brave words and his abject deeds. There is nothing of this in *Richard III*. He who runs may read his character. Richard's villainy is set forth with all the directness demanded in transpontine melodrama. He has already revealed his character in *Henry VI* (Part III, Act III, Scene 2).

" Why I can smile, and murder whiles I smile;
And cry 'content' to that which grieves my heart;
And wet my cheeks with artificial tears,
And frame my face to all occasions.
I'll drown more sailors than the mermaid shall;
I'll slay more gazers than the basilisk;
I'll play the orator as well as Nestor;
Deceive more slyly than Ulysses could;
And like a Sinon, take another Troy:
I can add colours to the chameleon,
Change shapes with Proteus for advantages;
And set the murderous Machiavel to school.
Can I do this, and cannot get a crown?
Tut, even if further off, I'll pluck it down!"

The broadest of hints conveyed in *Henry VI* is confirmed by the soliloquy with which *Richard III* opens:

" I, that am rudely stamp'd, and want love's majesty
To strut before a wanton ambling nymph ;
I, that am curtail'd of this fair proportion,
Cheated of feature by dissembling nature,

. . . . . .

And therefore,—since I cannot prove a lover,

. . . . . .

I am determined to prove a villain."

There is no gradual evolution of character, no subtle revelation here ; it is all clean cut, definite, unmistakeable—essentially in the style of Marlowe. The point is admirably put by Mr. Hudson : " The points of tragic stress are more frequent and the dramatic motives more on the surface, and more obvious, not to say obtrusive, than may well consist with the reason and law of art. . . . Then, too, the ethical idea or sense ; instead of being duly poised or interfused with the dramatic current, comes too near overriding and displacing it—the pressure of a special purpose marring the organic symmetry of the work."* And again : " The character of Richard is the key to the dramatic structure of the play. The form and scope of his individuality is such that other men's cannot stand in subordination to it, but must crush it or fly from it, or be absorbed into it. . . . Properly speaking, there is no interaction between Richard and the other persons of the drama. He is the all-in-all of every scene. What differentiates the play from Shakspeare's other dramas is that the entire action, in all its parts and stages—so

* *Op. cit. II*, 137.

far at least as it has any human origin and purpose not only springs from the hero as its source, but finds in him its end. The result is that the play is not so much a composition of co-operative characters, mutually developing and developed, as the prolonged yet hurried outcome of a single character, to which the other persons serve but as exponents and conductors. The Richard of the play, like a volume of electricity, discloses himself by means of ethics and preaches their active powers in the very process of doing so."* But to the character of the hero we shall have to return later. Thus much has been required to substantiate the argument as to the date of composition, an argument which rests largely upon the evidences of Marlowesque influence, not equally discernible in *Richard II*, or in any later play.

A word must be added as to the sources from which Shakspeare derived his materials for the play. There existed in Shakspeare's day a Latin play, *Ricardus Tertius*, written by Dr. Thomas Legge, and acted at the University of Cambridge before 1583. But there is no resemblance between Dr. Legge's play and Shakspeare's, and no evidence to show that Shakspeare had ever heard of it. There was also a play in English, entitled, *The True Tragedy of Richard the Third*: wherein is shown the death of Edward the Fourth, with the smothering of the two young Princes in the Tower: with a lamentable end of Shore's wife, an example for all wicked women. And lastly, the conjunction and joining of the two noble Houses, Lancaster and York."† This

* Introduction to the Hudson Shakspeare, pp. xxiii. and xxiv.

† Cf. Hazlitt's: *Shakspeare's Library*, part ii, vol i. pp 43, 129.

play was first printed in 1594, and belongs in composition to a still earlier date—it was written, so some would argue from internal evidence, before 1588. But again there is nothing to suggest, still less to prove, that Shakspeare, when writing his *Richard III*, had ever seen or heard of *The True Tragedy*. Plainly, however, the subject was "in the air." Shakspeare, as usual, got all he wanted from Holinshed's *Chronicle*, while Holinshed, in his turn, relied, for this portion of his narrative, upon Sir Thomas More's *The History of King Richard the Third*.* More's principal authority was Archbishop Morton—the Bishop of Ely of this play—in whose household Sir Thomas More was educated. Archbishop Morton is thus the ultimate link in the chain of historical authorities, and his strong partisanship on behalf of the Lancastrian dynasty may account for the heavy brush with which Shakspeare lays on the darker colours in his portrait of Richard III. As to the historical accuracy of the portrait more must be said presently.

It is noteworthy that of the fourteen years covered by the play, not less than twelve are comprised in Act I and the first Scene of Act II. Four Acts, all but one Scene, are devoted to the two years, 1483-1485. This allocation of time still further tends to concentrate attention upon a single personage and to justify the title, given to the play in several of the earlier editions: *The Tragedy of King Richard the Third*, contayning his treacherous Plots against his brother Clarence; the pitiful murder of his innocent

* The biography was published both in English and Latin. Cf. *The Works of Sir Thomas More*. London, 1557. *Mori Opera*. Lovanii, 1566.

Nephews; his tyrannical Usurpation; with the whole course of his detested life and most deserved death. More editions of this play are said to have been printed before 1640 than of any other play by Shakspeare.*

The play opens in unusual fashion with a soliloquy by Richard himself, wherein, as we have seen, the dissembling villain reveals to the audience his whole mind and heart: the bitterness of soul arising from physical malformation; the vaulting ambition determined to find compensation for the lack of domestic joys in the exercise of political power. But Edward IV still reigns, and between Richard and the throne there stand his brother Clarence and their two young nephews.

Clarence, "simple plain Clarence," was the first obstacle to be removed. His committal to the Tower is the first incident of the play, though his actual murder by Gloucester's orders is preceded by the death and burial of Henry VI. As a fact, it was not until February, 1478, that Clarence was arraigned for treason and sentenced to death by the subservient Yorkist Parliament. But there is dramatic, if not historical, propriety in giving precedence to his arrest, and the first scene closes, appropriately enough, with a second soliloquy in which Gloucester still further outlines his immediate policy:

"And, if I fail not in my deep intent,
Clarence hath not another day to live:
Which done, God take King Edward to his mercy,
And leave the world for me to bustle in!

* Hudson's Introduction, p. xiv.

For then I'll marry Warwick's youngest daughter:
What though I kill'd her husband and her father?
The readiest way to make the wench amends
Is to become her husband and her father:
The which will I."

Close upon the announcement of this revolting purpose comes its still more revolting accomplishment. The Lady Anne Neville attends as chief mourner the burial of her father-in-law, "Poor key-cold figure of a holy King." Upon this rite Gloucester breaks in. Nothing is lacking to the irony of the situation. The corpse of the murdered King; the two-fold grief of the Lady Anne mourning the loss of father-in-law and husband; the intervention of the most implacable enemy of the Lancastrian House. This is the occasion selected by Gloucester for his strange wooing of the Lady Anne. And yet, repulsive as it is, we cannot resist, any more than could the Lady Anne, the personal magnetism of a villain, so consummate and complete; we cannot but share his own superb self-confidence. He does not hesitate to place his life at the mercy of the grief-stricken and infuriated woman when he seeks to wed:

"If thy revengeful heart cannot forgive,
Lo, here I lend thee this sharp-pointed sword;
Which if thou please to hide in this true breast
And let the soul forth that adoreth thee,
I lay it naked to the deadly stroke
And humbly beg the death upon my knee."

Richard, as Professor Dowden has well said, "knows the measure of woman's frailty and relies on the

spiritual force of his audacity and dissimulation to subdue the weak hand which tries to lift the sword."* His confidence is completely justified. The sword is dropped. The Lady Anne is won. Hardly has she given vent to her joy

> " To see you are become so penitent,"

than Gloucester, on his part, gives vent to the scorn with which his own success inspires him :

> " Was ever woman in this humour woo'd ?
> Was ever woman in this humour won ?
> I'll have her ; but I will not keep her long."

Thus the second scene, like the first, closes with a soliloquy from Richard.

The third shows us the divisions at Court due to the advancement of the Queen's friends. Their mutual bickerings are interrupted by the arrival of the old Queen Margaret :

> " Hear me, you wrangling pirates, that fall out
> In sharing that which you have pill'd from me ! "

In sheer force of character and in energy of vituperation the old Queen is the only character in the play who can at all claim to divide the honours with Richard. There is no historical warrant for her introduction in this play. As a fact, she was confined in the Tower, after the battle of Tewkesbury in 1471 and there she remained until, in 1475, she was ransomed by her father. She then returned to France where she died in 1482. But, dramatically, this departure from historical fact is more than justified

* *Mind and Art* p. 185.

" Shakspeare personifies in her," writes Mezières, " the ancient Nemesis; he gives her more than human proportions, and represents her as a sort of supernatural apparition. She penetrates freely into the palace of Edward IV, and there breathes forth her hatred in the presence of the family of York and its courtier attendants." Her second and final appearance is in the fourth Scene of Act IV. Edward IV is dead; his sons have been murdered, and Margaret, once the proudest of unhappy Queens, but now a shrunken hag, comes to " gather the fruits of the malediction "* pronounced in the first Act upon the whole Yorkist tribe. Queen Margaret, says another critic, " is a sort of wailing or ululating chorus to the thick-thronging butcheries and agonies that wind their course through the play. A great, brave, fearful woman indeed, made sacred by the anguishes that a wife and mother can know."† We bid her good-bye without regret; rather with a positive sense of relief. From the first she had brought to England nothing but sorrow. A strong man might have found in her a strong helpmeet. Her own force of character could not supply the necessary strength to one so weak, yet withal so good, as her unhappy husband Henry VI. Pitiless, unscrupulous, a shameless partisan, but a good wife and a devoted mother, Queen Margaret is a typical figure in a distracted and agitated age. We follow her stormy career in these plays, not wholly without sympathy, and even at times with admiration, but as she advances in years, her character hardens, and in the final scenes we instinctively

* Shakepeare, *Ses œuvres et ses Critiques* (p. 199).

† Hudson: *Introduction*, p. xlvi.

shield our eyes from the sight of a woman who had once filled the highest place, but, feeding her soul on mere hatred, descends at the last to the lowest depths—a foul-mouthed malevolent witch.

The first Act ends with the murder of Clarence in the Tower; the second opens with the death of Edward IV. The death of the former is attributed by Shakspeare to Gloucester. He may have been guilty of it, but there is no sufficient evidence of the fact. Neither Holinshed nor Sir Thomas More impute it to Gloucester. The former, following Hall, states that Clarence was privily drowned in a butt of Malmsey wine, but all that we know on certain authority is that he was convicted of high treason and attainted; that he was committed to the Tower, and that a few days later it was announced that he had died there. His marriage with the Lady Isabel Neville, who died in 1476, brought him great wealth and a great baronial position, but he was a weak and irresolute man, and politically of no account. His death did, however, remove one obstacle from the path of Gloucester's ambition; the death of Edward IV removed a second. Edward IV. though not a great King, was a man of very different calibre from his brother, "simple, plain Clarence." The Yorkists, as a family, enjoyed a degree of popularity always denied, save in the person of Henry V, to the Lancastrians; and of all the members of his House, Edward IV enjoyed it in fullest measure. Of handsome person, and easy manners, he played to perfection the part of a *bourgeois* King. Like other members of his family, he had a genius for generalship, and he came to the throne with the prestige which

always attaches to a successful soldier; he had real sympathy with the commercial instincts of his subjects, and did not disdain to dabble in trade himself. His adherence to the Burgundian alliance won him great favour among the London merchants. But he was a thoroughly bad man, and his personal vices were not redeemed by consistent or successful statesmanship. Bishop Stubbs, always on the side of cautious charity, does not hesitate to say that as a man he was "vicious far beyond anything that England had seen since the days of John; and more cruel and bloodthirsty than any King she had ever known; he had, too, a conspicuous talent for extortion." He had all the self-indulgence, the voluptuousness, the well-mannered ruthlessness, the literary tastes and commercial instincts, generally associated with the Princes of the period of the Renaissance, but many better men and better Kings have left a less flattering memory behind them. In a sense he was fortunate in his successor. Edward was hardly less cruel than Richard, but his cruelty was largely hidden and half-redeemed by his fine presence, his sunny smile, his affability and accessibility. Richard was certainly not less able than Edward; equally competent in the field he was even cleverer in the closet; but he was as much hated as his brother was well liked. Like many mis-shapen men, he could win the protecting love of women; he never earned and never deserved the liking or respect of men.

Between this unscrupulous but supremely able villain and the object of his life's ambition there now stood only his brother's boys, Edward, Prince of Wales, and Richard, Duke of York; though Clarence

also was survived by children. Richard's first move was to "part the Queen's proud kindred from the Prince." With this object in view, Lord Rivers, the brother of the Queen, and governor of the Prince of Wales, Lord Grey, the Queen's son, and Sir Thomas Vaughan were committed to prison at Pomfret, and subsequently executed. On receiving the news the Queen fled, with her younger son, and took sanctuary at Westminster. Not for the first time. She had taken refuge there just before the birth of her elder son, and there the Prince of Wales first saw the light. No sanctuary, however, could avail against the all-powerful malevolence of Gloucester, and the young Duke of York was snatched from his mother's custody to join his elder brother in the Tower. With slight but deft touches are the characters of the two Princes contrasted: the elder, modest but acute; the younger quick witted, "bold, precocious, pert."* No qualities, however, can avert their doom. They stand in Gloucester's way, and no one who so stands is safe. Even a hint of neutrality suffices to bring retribution upon the head of the doubter. Witness the fate of Lord Hastings. Gloucester had attributed (Act III, Scene 4) all his bodily malformations to the witchcraft of his domestic opponents:

"Look how I am bewitched; behold mine arm
Is, like a blasted sapling, wither'd up:
And this is Edward's wife, that monstrous witch,
Consorted with that harlot-strumpet Shore,
That by their witchcraft thus have marked me."

Gervinus, p. 275.

Hastings breaks in :

" If they have done this thing, my gracious lord—"

" If ! (cries Gloucester in sudden fury) thou protector of this damned strumpet,
Tellest me of ' ifs.' Thou art a traitor,
Off with his head ! Now, by Saint Paul, I swear,
I will not dine until I see the same."

Thus Hastings is got rid of. In all the details of this famous scene, Shakspeare closely follows the narrative of Sir Thomas More, from whom he gets the incident of Gloucester sending for a dish of strawberries from the Bishop of Ely's garden in Holborn. That slight, but eminently characteristic, incident confirms, as Courtenay points out, " the probability that More's history was derived from Bishop Morton, if not written (as Sir Henry Ellis conjectures) by that prelate himself."* Things now hurried on apace towards the *coup d'état* upon which Richard had long ago determined. Hastings was executed on June 13th, 1483 ; Bishop Morton and Bishop Rotherham, described by Bishop Stubbs as " the two strongest prelates in the Council," were committed to the Tower, whence Morton was, shortly afterwards, removed to imprisonment in Wales. The appearance of Gloucester and his ally, Buckingham, " in rotten armour, marvellous ill-favoured," is also a touch taken from Sir Thomas More's narrative, and is intended to indicate such haste and urgency on the part of the Duke, as to justify to the Lord Mayor the sudden execution of Hastings.

Gloucester still proceeds, however, towards the

* *Op. cit.* II, pp. 86-87.

execution of his fell purpose with all possible circumspection. He bids Buckingham " Infer the bastardy of Edward's children; and further hints that the birth of Edward IV himself was not free from suspicion of illegitimacy :

" But touch this sparingly, as 'twere far off ;
Because you know, my lord, my mother lives."

Buckingham played his part skilfully according to his brief :

" Withal I did infer your lineaments,—
Being the right ideal of your father,
Both in your favour and nobleness of mind ;
Laid open all your victories in Scotland,
Your discipline in war, wisdom in peace,
Your bounty, virtue, fair humility ;
Indeed, left nothing fitting for the purpose
Untouch'd or slightly handled in discourse."

But the citizens to whom the oration was addressed refused to respond and remained obstinately silent. The Mayor, with obvious reluctance, reinforced the Duke's appeal, and at last some of his own followers :

" At lower end of the hall, hurl'd up their caps,
And some ten voices cried, ' God save King Richard ! ' "

The whole scene at the Guildhall, though not enacted upon the stage, is inimitably described by Buckingham, who prepares Gloucester for his part in the final coup :

" Intend some fear ;
Be not you spoke with but by mighty suit :
And look you get a prayer-book in your hand,
And stand betwixt two churchmen, good my lord."

His instructions are followed to the letter. The citizens, led by the Lord Mayor, arrive, and crave audience of the Duke of Gloucester. Buckingham is at hand to interpret their wishes :

" we heartily solicit
Your gracious self to take on you the charge
And kingly government of this your land ;—
Not as protector, steward, substitute,
Or lowly factor for another's gain ;
But as successively, from blood to blood,
Your right of birth, your empery, your own."

Gloucester makes a show of hesitation :

" Alas, why would you heap these cares on me ?
I am unfit for state and majesty :—
I do beseech you, take it not amiss ;
I cannot nor I will not yield to you."

The Mayor and citizens retire, only, however, to be immediately recalled to witness Richard's reluctant assent to their petition :

" Since you will buckle fortune on my back,
To bear her burden, whether I will or no,
. . . . . .
Your mere enforcement shall acquittance me
From all the impure blots and stains thereof."

The coronation is fixed for the following day.

Thus did Richard attain the supreme object of his ambition. But the little Princes still lived. To Buckingham Richard hints his desire for their immediate removal.

KING RICHARD :

" Why, Buckingham, I say, I would be King."

BUCKINGHAM :

" Why, so you are, my thrice-renowned liege."

KING RICHARD :

" Ha ! am I King ? 'Tis so ; but Edward lives."

BUCKINGHAM :

" True, noble Prince."

KING RICHARD :

" O bitter consequence,
That Edward still should live,—True, noble Prince !
Cousin, thou wast not wont to be so dull :—
Shall I be plain ?—I wish the bastards dead."

But Buckingham hesitates ; from so dastardly a crime, even in his patron's interest, he obviously shrinks. Richard's anger is as unbounded as his scorn. " High-reaching Buckingham grows circumspect." Without a moment's hesitation the new King flings away his blunted tool :

" The deep revolving, witty Buckingham
No more shall be the neighbour to my counsels."

More compliant instruments are soon found. To Catesby he confides his immediate plans. It is to be given out—an obvious prelude to her disappearance—that the Queen, the Lady Anne, is "very grievous sick." Then there are Clarence's children to be disposed of. Catesby is bidden to find "some mean-born gentleman" to whom the daughter is to be forthwith married. Richard's purpose in this matter was not, as a fact, carried out. Clarence's daughter, the Lady Margaret, was at this time a mere child; she was, in the next reign, created Countess of Salisbury, and became the wife of Sir Richard Pole. Clarence's son the King could afford to ignore. Holinshed describes him as "a very innocent"; Richard himself speaks of him as "foolish," meaning it would seem, half-witted. Spared, on this account, by Richard, he fell a victim to the jealousy of Henry VII, and the ambition of Perkin Warbeck. That clever and audacious adventurer gave himself out to be Edward Plantagenet, Earl of Warwick, son of the murdered Clarence. Carefully coached in the part by the old Duchess of Burgundy and accepted as the legitimate claimant by a large body of Yorkist partisans in England, and still more cordially in Ireland, Warbeck became a focus for much of the discontent which the disciplinary policy of Henry VII inevitably aroused. His assumption of the name of Edward, Earl of Warwick, was, however, a gross and palpable blunder, for the real Warwick was under lock and key, and could, if occasion demanded, be produced. Produced he was, and Warbeck's pretensions were thereby proved to be entirely baseless. Nevertheless, the impudent assumption of the

adventurer cost the true Plantagenet his life. The true Prince and the false were both sent to the block in 1499. For the moment, however, the half-wit was permitted to survive. Richard had higher game in view :

" it stands me much upon,
To stop all hopes whose growth may damage me.
I must be married to my brother's daughter,
Or else my kingdom stands on brittle glass ;—
Murder her brothers, and then marry her ! "

No time was lost. Buckingham, as we have seen, recoiled from the commission of a crime, so gratuitous and senseless. A blunter instrument was picked up in the person of Sir James Tyrrell, and the young Princes paid the penalty of their birth. So Shakspeare teaches, and so posterity has mostly believed. On the critical question involved, a word will be said presently. Meanwhile, Richard's brief and relentless summary of the situation is too characteristic to be omitted :

" The son of Clarence have I pent up close ;
His daughter meanly have I match'd in marriage ;
The sons of Edward sleep in Abraham's bosom,
And Anne, my wife, hath bid the world good-night."

There remained only the Princess Elizabeth. She was to be the next victim :

" Now, for I know the Bretagne Richmond aims
At young Elizabeth, my brother's daughter,
And, by that knot, looks proudly on the crown,
To her I go, a jolly thriving wooer."

Before he can urge his suit there comes bad news —that Morton, Bishop of Ely, had fled to Brittany to join Henry Tudor, and that Buckingham had taken the field with a force of " hardy Welshmen." In the scenes that follow there is a dramatic foreshortening of historical events. As a fact, Henry, Earl of Richmond, made his first attempt to gain the throne in October, 1483, four months after Richard's usurpation. But the attempt came to nothing, and the briefest reference is made to this incident at the end of Scene 4 of Act IV. The second and successful attempt was made nearly two years later in August, 1485. Two years of Richard's actual reign are, therefore, virtually ignored by Shakspeare.

The catastrophe comes on apace, but before the final blow falls upon the usurping King there is an intensely dramatic scene (Act IV, Scene 4), the spirit of which has been so exactly caught by Professor Dowden that I prefer to quote his description of it, rather than obtrude my own : " There is," he writes, " a Blake-like tenor and beauty in the scene in which the three women—two Queens and a Duchess—seat themselves upon the ground in their desolation and despair, and cry aloud in utter angusih of spirit. First by the mother of two Kings, then by Edward's widow, last by the terrible Medusa-like Queen Margaret, the same attitude is assumed and the same grief is poured forth. Misery has made them indifferent to all ceremony of queenship, and, for a time, to their private differences ; they are seated, a rigid yet tumultuously passionate group, in the majesty of mere womanhood and supreme calamity. Readers acquainted with Blake's illustrations

to the Book of Job will remember what effects, sublime and appalling, the artist produces by animating a group of figures with one common passion, which spontaneously produces in each individual the same extravagant movement of head and limbs." There is, as I have already pointed out, no historical warrant for the presence of Queen Margaret in England at this time, while the Duchess of York is represented as a much older woman than she actually was; but such liberties were quite legitimate. The scene as drawn by Shakspeare is at once powerful and horrible, and especially horrible is the prophecy and prayer of the old Queen Margaret:

" Bear with me; I am hungry for revenge,
And now I cloy me with beholding it.
Thy Edward he is dead, that stabbed my Edward;
Thy other Edward dead, to quit my Edward;
Young York he is but boot, because both they
Match not the high perfection of my loss:
Thy Clarence he is dead, that stabbed my Edward;
And the beholders of this tragic play,
Th' adulterate Hastings, Rivers, Vaughan, Grey,
Untimely smother'd in their dusky graves.
Richard yet lives, hell's black intelligencer;
Only reserved their factor to buy souls,
And send them thither; but at hand, at hand,
Ensues his piteous and unpitied end:
Earth gapes, hell burns, fiends roar, saints pray,
To have him suddenly convey'd from hence.—
Cancel his bond of life, dear God, I pray,
That I may live to say, The dog is dead!"

The horror inspired by the scene is further intensified by the intrusion of King Richard himself. He comes to solicit from Queen Elizabeth the hand of his own niece, the last of the Yorkists, the Princess destined to carry the claims of the Yorkist dynasty to the credit of the Tudors. Repulsive as was Richard's wooing of the Lady Anne, his cold-blooded argument in favour of a marriage with his niece is almost worse. But could any woman withstand the horrible fascination of the cunning crouchback when he really exerted himself to win or to persuade ?

QUEEN ELIZABETH :

" Shall I be tempted of the devil thus ? "

KING RICHARD :

" Ay, if the devil tempt thee to do good. "

. . . . . .

QUEEN ELIZABETH :

" But thou didst kill my children."

KING RICHARD :

" But in your daughter's womb I'll bury them :
Where, in that nest of spicery, they shall breed
Selves of themselves, to your recomforture."

QUEEN ELIZABETH :

" Shall I go win my daughter to thy will ? "

KING RICHARD :

" And be a happy mother by the deed. "

QUEEN ELIZABETH :

" I go."

The question has been raised, whether the assent of Queen Elizabeth was genuine or merely feigned. The substance of the scene is derived from historical sources, but the point thus raised has only an academic interest. Dramatically I incline to the view that Shakspeare intended us to conclude that in this case, as in the earlier, Richard's powers of persuasion proved irresistible. His intellectual endowments were confessedly superb; in both these scenes —the wooing of Anne and the persuasion of Queen Elizabeth—they were exerted to the utmost, and it is an interesting psychological point whether the intellectual appeal was not strengthened, rather than neutralized, by those physical characteristics which the mere man is apt to catalogue as defects. It is an unquestionable fact that for some women such defects have a powerful attraction, more particularly when they are combined with intellectual powers of a high order. Historically the probabilities are the other way. Queen Elizabeth was fully cognisant of the ambitions of Henry Tudor, and had already promised her daughter's hand to him, on the condition, we may assume, that he could offer her a throne.

Henry Tudor was soon in a position to do so, for Richard's course was now nearly run. From every side there came the news of growing disaffection and defection. First comes Stanley with the tidings:

> "Richmond is on the seas.
> Stirred up by Dorset, Buckingham and Ely,
> He makes for England here, to claim the Crown."

The reference here is, in fact, to the earlier of the two expeditions undertaken by Richmond. Then comes a messenger to announce that :

> " now in Devonshire,
> Sir Edward Courtney, and the haughty prelate,
> Bishop of Exeter, his elder brother,
> With many more confederates, are in arms."

A second messenger announces a rising in Kent under the Guildfords ; a third that Yorkshire is up under " Sir Thomas Lovel and Lord Marquess Dorset." A ray of hope is brought by the news that Buckingham's army had been dispersed " by sudden floods and fall of waters ; " and, later on, that Henry himself, instead of landing, had " made his course again for Bretagne," and that Buckingham was taken. But close upon this came the tidings that " the Earl of Richmond is with a mighty power landed at Milford." It will be noted that the two expeditions, separated in fact by an interval of nearly two years, are thus inextricably confused.

Act V brings Richmond himself upon the scene. The man who now came forward to claim the throne was the son of a Welsh gentleman, Edmund Tudor, and grandson of Owen Tudor, who had become the second husband of the Princess Katharine of France, the widow of Henry V, and the mother of Henry VI. The mother of Henry Tudor, now claimant to the throne, was the Lady Margaret Beaufort, daughter of John Beaufort, first Duke of Somerset, and one of the legitimated descendants of Catherine Swynford and John of Gaunt. The curious will find

a learned and minute discussion of Henry Tudor's title to the Crown in one of the most brilliant of Bishop Stubbs's *Lectures*,* but the point must not be permitted to detain us. Two things may, however, be said in passing: first, that the rules of descent for the English Crown were never actually defined until the Act of Settlement (1701); and secondly, that Henry Tudor had, apart from the issue of battle, apart from his marriage (on which he was studiously careful not to rely), and apart from the action of his first Parliament, at least a colourable title to the Crown. After the overthrow of the Lancastrian party at Tewkesbury, the young Prince took refuge at the Court of Brittany, and there he remained, a centre for Lancastrian hopes, until 1483. Dramatically he appears "expressly as the champion and representative of the moral order of the world which Richard had endeavoured to set aside."† In the fight on Bosworth Field two issues, therefore, are involved. On the one hand there is the conflict, always implicit since the "usurpation" of Henry of Lancaster, between the rival dynasties. On the other, there is at stake a moral issue between the powers of light and darkness, the principles of right and wrong.

The scene in the two camps on the eve of the fight at Bosworth Field recalls, or rather in a literary sense anticipates, the scenes in *Henry V* on the eve of Agincourt. Thus in his camp at Tamworth Richmond himself enheartens his comrades:

"In God's name, cheerly on, courageous friends,

* Lectures on Mediæval and Modern History, pp. 343, *seq.*:
† Dowden, *Op. cit.*, p. 190.

To reap the harvest of perpetual peace
By this one bloody trial of sharp war."

And the Earl of Oxford responds in like strain :

" Every man's conscience is a thousand swords,
To fight against their guilty homicide."

His companions retire ; Richmond is left alone in his tent, and the last words before he lays him down to rest breathe the spirit of Henry V at Agincourt, though the literary expression falls short :

" O Thou whose captain I account myself,
Look on my forces with a gracious eye ;
Put in their hands thy bruising irons of wrath,
That they may crush down with a heavy fall
The usurping helmets of our adversaries !
Make us thy ministers of chastisement,
That we may praise Thee in the victory !
To thee I do commend my watchful soul
Ere I let fall the windows of mine eyes :
Sleeping and waking, O, defend me still ! "

From the sublimity of this scene Shakspeare passes, with an abrupt transition such as the practised hand which wrote *Henry V* would never have used to a melodramatic ghost scene. Between the two tents occupied respectively by Richmond and King Richard there rise, in rapid succession, the ghosts of Prince Edward, the son of Henry VI ; of Henry VI himself ; of Clarence ; of Rivers, Grey, and Vaughan; of Hastings ; of the two young sons of Edward IV ; of Queen Anne ; of Buckingham ; in fine, of all Richard's victims. In turn they imprecate curses upon the head of Richard ; in turn they pray for

the success of Richmond. The whole scene is somewhat vulgar in conception and mechanical in execution, and some commentators take the view that in this scene we have one of the few traces of an older and much inferior play upon the lines of which Shakspeare constructed his own. It may be so. Anyway, the device is a crude and clumsy one, if it be adopted, as seemingly it is, to suggest the workings of Richard's evil conscience. Equally unsatisfactory, in a psychological sense, is the soliloquy of Richard when he starts up affrighted,—so unsatisfactory that some editors propose to omit a part of it as spurious. For this I can find no sufficient reason. Throughout the play we have, side by side, work of the highest and the lowest quality, and it seems to me a dangerous process to omit lines solely on the ground that "they could not possibly have been written by Shakspeare." Shakspeare often wrote under great pressure; no more than lesser men was he invariably at his best, and in his earlier plays his taste is far from flawless. The lines to which special exception is taken are as follows:

"It is now dead midnight,
Cold fearful drops stand on my trembling flesh.
What, do I fear Myself? There's none else by:
Richard loves Richard; that is, I am I.
Is there a murderer here? No;—yes, I am:
Then fly. What, from myself? Great reason why,—
Lest I revenge myself upon myself.

. . . . . .

I am a villain: yet I lie, I am not.
Fool, of thyself speak well; fool, do not flatter

My conscience hath a thousand several tongues,
And every tongue brings in a several tale,
And every tale condemns me for a villain."

The account of the battle follows, as closely as a stage battle can, the historical authorities. Even for the personal combat between Richmond and Richard there is good warrant, though none, as far as I know, for the suggestion that Richard was actually killed by his rival. But killed he was on the field. Not even his fine generalship and personal bravery—and neither was ever questioned—could avail to save a cause so manifestly losing, and so indisputably deserving to lose.

Like Henry V, Henry Tudor is modest in victory, and to God gives all the praise:

" God and your arms be praised, victorious friends;
The day is ours, the bloody dog is dead.

. . . . . .

We will unite the White Rose and the Red:—

. . . . . .

England hath long been mad, and scarred herself;
The brother blindly shed the brother's blood,
The father rashly slaughtered his own son,
The son, compelled, been butcher to the sire:
All this divided York and Lancaster,
Divided in their dire division,
O, now, let Richmond and Elizabeth,
The true succeeders of each royal house,
By God's fair ordinance conjoin together,
And let their heirs—God, if they will be so—
Enrich the time to come with smooth-faced peace,
With smiling plenty and fair prosperous days."

National unity. This was the one text of the Chronicle Plays. It was a text on which a great-hearted patriot might naturally enlarge in Elizabethan England. The one thing dreaded by the more prudent statesmen of the sixteenth century was, as the next chapter will show, a disputed succession and a consequent renewal of civil war. The danger was not imaginary, nor even remote. Queen Elizabeth was childless. The future was dark. If the testament of Henry VIII, sanctioned by Parliament, was to prevail, the Crown would go to the Dorsets; if the principle of hereditary succession, to the Stuarts. Nor were dynastic dissensions the only ones to be feared. The inflation and depreciation of the currency was making life hard for the poor; the King found it increasingly difficult to "live of his own." The expenses of government were increasing, while the value of money was falling. It was inevitable that the Crown, the moment the rigid parsimony of Elizabeth was relaxed, should have more frequent recourse to parliament. Parliament, if asked to supply the necessities of the administration, would be certain to seek a redress of grievances. The latter were not wholly absent even under the tactful rule of Queen Elizabeth. What might happen under a less tactful or less experienced successor? Under the inspiration of Calvinism the temper of the Commons was rising. It was repressed out of personal deference to the old Queen; but the more and the longer it was repressed, the more violently would it be certain to explode when occasion offered. No Englishman, taking a dispassionate survey of the situation in the last decade of the sixteenth century, could possibly have looked

to the immediate future without grave misgiving. The one chance was that the nation would hold together; that Romans, Anglicans and Puritans would compose their differences or agree to differ in harmony; that the new agrarian classes called into being partly by economic changes, partly by the dissolution of the abbeys, would refrain from pushing their new policy to the detriment of the customary tenants and the landless labourers; that Parliament would use the powers which, despite Tudor "autocracy", it was gradually consolidating in the sixteenth century with due regard to the constitutional right of the Crown, and that the Crown would learn to yield gracefully to the inevitable "encroachments" of the Commons. The future may well have seemed dark; it was undeniably uncertain.

It would be fantastic to suggest that all this was specifically in the mind of Shakspeare as he dwelt upon the misfortunes brought upon England by the dynastic disputes, by the weak Government, and by the social disorder of the fifteenth century. Yet it is impossible to deny that, all through these Chronicle Plays, he harps upon the supreme duty of promoting national unity and social solidarity. It was because the Tudors secured to the country these greatest of blessings that the hearts of patriotic Englishmen went out to them, despite faults and blemishes of character, with reverence, gratitude and affection; and to none of the Tudors, in fuller measure, than to the Virgin Queen whose happiness it was to count among her subjects a Raleigh and a Drake, a Spenser and a Shakspeare.

But we must recur for a moment to *Richard III.*

The play has a threefold significance: by reason of its stage-history; by reason of the character of the "hero," and not least because it has fixed, probably for all time, the historical tradition of that period of English history with which it deals.

Few of Shakspeare's plays have been more successful on the stage than *Richard III*. Nor are the reasons far to seek. The successive situations are intensely dramatic, not to say melodramatic; there is a real human interest in the plot, and the characters are firmly and strongly drawn—more particularly the leading character. No wonder that all the leading tragedians have aspired to play the part of Richard III, and that most of them have played it: Richard Burbage in Shakspeare's own day; Garrick, Sheridan, and Kemble (in Colley Cibber's version) in the eighteenth century; Edmund Kean, Charles Kean, and Macready (still in Cibber's version) in the earlier part of the nineteenth century; Henry Irving, Edwin Booth and Barry Sullivan in the later years of the century. Not, however, until Irving's revival at the Lyceum in 1877 was *Richard III* played in its original Shakspearian form.

To all these tragedians the part of Richard III offered irresistible attractions. It is pre-eminently a "star" part. No less than 1,160 lines are assigned to him; Buckingham being a bad second with 364, and Queen Elizabeth third with 274. But, as I have already said; the only character which can, in any way, divert attention from Richard himself, is that of Queen Margaret. And she has only 218 lines to speak. Richard is, in very truth, "himself alone."

Upon the analysis of Richard's character Shakspearian commentators have expended immense pains. Yet, as it seems to me, to relatively little purpose; for there is no such subtlety in the character as there is for instance in Richard II, or in Henry V, or even in Henry IV. Richard III, says Henry Morley, is "the nearest approach made by Shakspeare to the suggestion of an incarnate spirit of evil." Such a character offers few opportunities for subtlety of interpretation. But the critics are not to be denied any more than the actors. From a crowd of them I select three as the most discriminating: "Richard," writes Hudson, "is a skilful dissembler, but is not all hypocrite: his courage and self-control at least are genuine, and his strength of will is exerted even more in repressing his own nature than in oppressing others. Here it is perhaps that we have the most admirable feature of the delineation. Such a vigour of self-command—the central force of all great characters—seldom fails to captivate the judgement, or to inspire something like respect." Coleridge finds Richard's outstanding characteristic in "pride of intellect." Shakspeare here developes, he says, "in a tone of sublime morality the dreadful consequences of placing the moral in subordination to the more intellectual being." Dowden, on the contrary, declares with emphasis that Richard's dominant characteristic is not intellectual. It is, he says, "rather a dæmonic energy of will. . . . Essentially Shakspeare's Richard is of the diabolical (something more dreadful than the criminal) class. He is not weak because he is single-hearted in his devotion to evil. Richard does not serve two masters. He is not like

John, a dastardly criminal; he is not, like Macbeth, joyless and faithless, because he has deserted loyalty and honour. He has a fierce joy, and he is an intense believer in the creed of Hell. And therefore he is strong. He inverts the moral order of things and tries to live in this inverted system. He does not succeed: he dashes himself to pieces against the laws of the world which he has outraged. Yet, while John is wholly despicable we cannot refrain from yielding a certain tribute of admiration to the bold malefactor, who ventures on the daring experiment of choosing evil for his good." This is well and truly said.

Richard III was an evil thing in which human eyes can discern no soul of goodness. From his first appearance in Henry VI down to the last scene on Bosworth Field he was never visited by any twinge of conscience, by a single pang of remorse; he was never inspired by affection, or even by pity, for any mortal thing. Father, mother, brothers, nephews, niece, comrades in arms, friends in council, all alike were regarded merely from the point of his own personal ambition, as instruments to be used, as obstacles to be removed, just as interest or policy might dictate. Richard was a dissembler but not a hypocrite; for a hypocrite deceives not only others but himself. Richard never did. He knew himself to be the villain that he was, and he gloried in his shame. He was never whimsical; he never tortured in mere lust of cruelty; he simply pursued his end relentlessly, without regard for others. The delineation of such a character betokens the prentice hand. It lacks *chiaroscuro*. It is Marlowesque rather than characteristically Shakspearian.

Is it true to historical fact? That is a question which has naturally engaged the attention of the historians rather than the commentators. It is not easy to answer it, but two things may safely be said. There is no doubt, on the one hand, that Shakspeare's delineation was in strict accord with the best historical authorities available in his day; and on the other, that it fixed the historical tradition certainly for a century, perhaps for all time. Not until the publication, in 1768, of Horace Walpole's *Historic Doubts on the Life and Death of King Richard III* was the accuracy of that tradition questioned. Since that time there have been various attempts, if not entirely to rehabitate the character of Richard, at least to mitigate the asperity of the judgement pronounced by Shakspeare, and accepted by most subsequent critics. The grounds upon which a review of the original sentence is urged are twofold: on the one hand it is contended that there is no sufficient evidence of the murder of the young Princes in the Tower, and still less evidence that, if the crime was committed, Richard instigated it; on the other hand, the disciples of the higher criticism point out, with indisputable truth, that the whole story of Richard's villainy rests upon the testimony of witnesses or "authorities" who had no motive for defending his character and every reason to blacken it.

To the critical student of history the latter argument makes the stronger appeal. The murder of the young Princes is represented by Shakspeare, and has been generally regarded as the crowning and culminating atrocity in a consistently criminal career. The death of Henry VI; of the Duke of Clarence;

of Queen Anne ; the execution of "the Queen's proud kindred," of Rivers, Grey and Vaughan ; the ruthless removal of Hastings and Buckingham—all these were preparatory to the crowning act of the tragedy. The last of the crimes was also the most revolting, and it made an indelible impression. The rest were in the way of political business ; in that callous and bloodstained age human life was little accounted of, and the "removal" of an unpliant instrument or a political rival excited no more comment than a hostile vote in the House of Commons to-day. But the murder of two innocent and confiding boys, nearest in blood to the supposed murderer, though inspired by a similar motive, seemed to stand in a different category of criminality.

But were the boys murdered ? All that is definitely known is that Edward V and his brother Richard suddenly disappeared from "authentic history." "How long the boys lived in captivity, and how they died is a matter on which legend and conjecture have been rife with no approach to certainty. Most men believed and still believe that they died a violent death by their uncle's order."* Some confirmation was given to the popular belief by an accidental discovery made at the Tower some two hundred years afterwards. In 1674, when alterations were being carried out at the White Tower, under the direction of Sir Christopher Wren, some workmen came upon a chest which was found to contain the bones of two lads. It was at once assumed that the bones were those of the young Princes ; they were placed in a

* Stubbs : *Op. cit.* iii, 224, and cf. Ramsay : *Op. cit.* it, p. 554.

marble urn and deposited in Westminster Abbey in the north aisle of Henry VII's chapel.

Too much may, however, be made of this discovery and of the reception of it by a somewhat uncritical age. The popular belief had, before 1674, acquired the force of an historical tradition. Shakspeare and Burbage had combined to fix it. We are thus thrust back upon the question as to the *a priori* authenticity of the story as accepted by Shakspeare. He got it, as we have seen, from Holinshed; Holinshed took it straight from Sir Thomas More's *Life of Edward V*, and More's authority was presumably Archbishop Morton. Morton was a keen Lancastrian partisan, serving a King who posed as a Lancastrian and who was especially concerned to owe nothing of his title to his Yorkist Queen. No one, in Tudor days, could have any motive, save devotion to historical truth, for attempting to vindicate the memory of Richard Crouchback, and it is to this fact that Bishop Stubbs, Sir James Ramsay, and other modern historians have attributed "the general condemnation with which his life and reign have been visited." "Richard III," writes Sir James Ramsay, "left no one who cared enough for him to attempt the arduous task of rehabilitating his fame. The descendants of Edward IV might feel some tenderness for the name of their ancestor, but Yorkist and Lancastrian alike could join in execrating the memory of the treacherous Richard." *

His ability has never been questioned. His reputation as a soldier was won early and never lost. He had all the patience, the self-control, the prudence,

* *Op. cit.* ii, 554.

the clear vision which under happier circumstances would have made him a great statesman and a great diplomatist. In the play he is exhibited as devoting all his energy and talents to the contrivance and execution of a series of cold-blooded crimes. Such isolation of phenomena is dramatically justifiable; the critical historian would fain probe further. But, in this case, he is completely baffled by the lack of materials. The Lancastrian chroniclers have had it, from the first, all their own way; consequently any apologies which may be offered for Richard III must be largely *a priori*, and must rest upon conjecture rather than upon facts. To the lover of paradox this situation offers a rare chance, and he has not failed to seize it. The dark shadows of Shakspeare's portrait have been painted out, and Richard III has emerged, if not completely white-washed, at least in the chastened respectability of neutral tints.

But much laborious research has yielded curiously inadequate results. The character of Richard III stands to-day very much where Shakspeare left it—a man of great courage, of high intelligence, but quite devoid of the moral sense. "He was," wrote Sir Thomas More, "close and secret, a deep dissembler, lowly of countenance, arrogant of heart, outwardly companionable where he inwardly hated, not letting to kiss whom he thought to kill; despiteful and cruel not for evil will always, but often for ambition, and either for the surety or increase of his estate. He spared no man's death whose life withstood his purpose." Shakspeare's whole play is but a commentary on the text supplied by More. Between them they have fixed the historical tradition for the English-

speaking world. No ingenuity of exegesis, no studious labour of research will ever avail to shake it.

Upon the life and reign of Richard III, indeed upon the whole century to which his brief career formed a fitting climax, we turn our backs with genuine relief. To the new era which opens with the victory of Henry Tudor at Bosworth, we look with ardent and anxious anticipation. There remains, however, one question to be asked, and if possible, to be answered. The victory at Bosworth is generally claimed by the critics as a "Lancastrian triumph." If the claim be admitted, to what causes must that triumph be ascribed?

Sir James Ramsay insists: "that the Lancastrian dynasty showed great vitality. It was hard to upset in the first instance; it rose again mysteriously in 1470; and in 1485 it finally carried the day when only two years before it seemed extinct. These facts prove that its roots went deep into the soil. The accepted explanation is that the one party was constitutional and Parliamentary; the other Legitimist and arbitrary."* These facts are, indeed, indisputable; but if the argument set forth in these pages be accepted, the facts are as an explanation wholly insufficient. The truth seems rather to be that the great mass of the nation ardently desired one thing, and one thing only. As to dynastic claims, the people were indifferent, but they did crave strong governance. With Pope they might have said:

"For forms of government let fools contest,
Whate'er is best administered is best."

* *Op. cit.* ii, 552.

The sentiment of the eighteenth century philosopher, though not articulate, is implicit in the illuminating correspondence of the Paston family. It was at the back of Cade's insurrection. It was essentially the cause of the collapse of Henry VI. It was equally responsible for the overthrow of Richard III at Bosworth. The plain man acquiesced in the " usurpation " of Henry IV, not because Richard II was a despot, though he toyed with the theory of absolutism, but because he was an ineffective ruler. Henry VI, was a saint, but he was a weakling. Neither Edward IV nor Richard III, could be so described, but they both failed to secure to the nation what the nation desired —the relief and repose of a really strong administration.

The triumph of Henry of Richmond was due, not to any sentimental perference for the red rose of the Lancastrian, but to the fact that Henry's prowess in the field gave earnest of his strength as a ruler.

Nor did the promise lack fulfilment.

CHAPTER VIII

THE RE-BIRTH OF ENGLAND.

HENRY VIII AND THE TUDOR DICTATORSHIP.

"The change produced in England by the half century which succeeded the overthrow of Richard III was enormous. Instead of a people with scarcely a thought beyond the mere need of bodily safety we have a people busily occupied with the highest objects of thought and life . . . the whole gamut of human passion and feeling was run over."

S. R. GARDINER.

"On mature consideration I am inclined to regard Henry himself as the main originator of the greatest and most critical changes of his reign. . . . His mental abilities I rank very high. . . . Henry was every inch a King; *the* King, the whole King and nothing but the King."

BISHOP STUBBS.

"The Tudor monarchy rested on the middle classes which, being commercial and industrial, welcomed after the Civil War, a strong Government, thinking less for the moment of political liberty than of liberty to ply the loom, speed the plough, grow the wool, and spread the sail."

GOLDWIN SMITH.

"The Cardinal of York . . . rules both the King and the entire Kingdom. . . . He transacts by himself all the business which occupies all the magistracies, offices, and councils of Venice. . . . He is in very great repute, seven times more so than the Pope."—SEBASTIAN GIUSTINIANI to the Venetian Senate (1519).

FOR the scientific student of Institutions, there are few periods of English History more pregnant in significance, more apt for instruction, than the fifteenth century. Yet we are glad to be done with it. After the dust and turmoil of the Wars of the Roses, after the faithlessness of parties, and the selfishness and wickedness of individuals England needed to be born again. The Re-Birth came under the Tudors. Wyclif was, indeed, in some respects, a "harbinger of the Reformation"; Chaucer has been described, and with some truth, as the "morning star" of the Renaissance. But Wyclif and Chaucer were isolated and premature manifestations of a movement which could not yet be described as national. The national Re-Birth came to England with the sixteenth century; the battle of Bosworth is for her the real dividing line between mediæval and modern history.

Before, however, the nation could be re-born, it needed a period of rest and discipline. The England of the later fifteenth century might be accurately described under the figure of a schoolboy; essentially well-built, clean-limbed, radically sound in all his organs, but lean, lanky and overgrown. The nation, one might say, had outgrown its strength;

it was suffering from political lassitude and economic anæmia; it needed "a weight upon its head," in order that it might have time to "fill out." That weight was supplied by the Tudors. The nation required a tonic, and the successive dictators of the Tudor Dynasty were ready to superintend the application of the prescribed remedies.

A "dictatorship" is the true description of the Tudor régime. The Tudors were not "despots" like the Princes of the Italian Renaissance; or even like Louis XI of France or Philip II of Spain. In England the sixteenth century is pre-eminently a period of parliamentary development. If this statement be questioned let the critic compare the position and attitude of the parliament which accepted Henry VII with the attitude of the parliament which confronted James I with the *Apology* of 1604. Again, the sixteenth century is the period of the reconstruction of Local Government: the training and apprenticeship of the middle classes for the great political task which awaited them in the next century. Thus were the foundations laid of the system under which England was governed, and in the main admirably governed, until the nineteenth century. There were, it is true, other and not less characteristic features of the Tudor "dictatorship." The Tudors, as we have hinted, made no attempt to supersede Parliament; on the contrary, it was regularly summoned and fully employed. The legislative fertility of the sixteenth century is without a parallel until we come to the nineteenth, and much of the work done was of high and permanent significance; but it is not easy to determine how far Parliament was able to

exercise an independent judgement, or how far it served only to give legislative effect to the will of the sovereign. The Tudor Parliaments have been contemned as "subservient"; but acquiescence is not necessarily subservience. They are said to have been "packed"; but another view, and perhaps a juster, represents the policy, pursued by successive Tudor Sovereigns, of bestowing parliamentary representation upon a number of towns, as an intelligent and legitimate anticipation of the work of parliamentary reform. If the Tudors were not, in a broad way, carrying out the will of the people, why did not the people remove them? The Crown could exercise only a moral authority; it had no standing army at its command, and feudalism as a military force was extinct. It had, indeed, the Star Chamber and other "prerogative" Courts, but there was no Court in the land which equalled in popularity that of the Star Chamber. It was accepted and welcomed under the Tudors as an appropriate adjunct of a popular dictatorship*; it was abolished by the Long Parliament partly because it was no longer required, partly because the Stuart Kings had perverted the machinery of a dictatorship into an engine of despotism. It is of the essence of a dictatorship that its duration should not be unduly prolonged. It is called into being to meet an emergency; so long as the emergency lasted the people not only acquiesced in but welcomed it. The whole period between the battle of Bosworth and the defeat of the Armada

* Cf. A. F. Pollard: *Henry VIII*, p. 26, "The Star Chamber found its main difficulty in the number of suitors which flocked to a court where the King was Judge, the law's delays minimized, counsels' fees moderate, and justice rarely denied merely because it might happen to be legal."

might justly be regarded as an emergency period. It was a period not merely of rapid transition but of crisis; or rather it was marked by a succession of crises.

The first crisis was dynastic. Could the new dynasty be firmly established on the throne and the recurrence of civil war averted? That was the thought uppermost in the minds of thoughtful Englishmen, as will be clearly perceived when we come to deal with Shakspeare's treatment of the Divorce question. The apprehension of a disputed succession and the consequent revival of the struggle between the Red Rose and the White had more to do with the matrimonial adventures of Henry VIII than is commonly supposed. Why otherwise should a King, to whom the easy path of dalliance was always open, have allied himself in legalized marriage with a succession of peculiarly unattractive women?

Before the dynastic crisis had passed England was involved in an ecclesiastical crisis. The one undoubtedly reacted upon the other, but it is a profoundly unscientific reading of history to suggest that Henry's desire to get rid of Katharine of Aragon was the *cause* of the Reformation in England. The Divorce question supplied the occasion, the essential causes must be sought in regions far remote from the personal whims of the monarch.

Parallel with the ecclesiastical changes, and not unconnected with them, was the economic crisis which arose mainly from the commercialisation of agriculture and the resulting changes in the cultivation and tenure of land. In the course of this agrarian revolution the feudal organisation of society,

together with the manorial system, which was its agricultural complement, was finally broken up. The land passed into the ownership of new men. The preconceptions of these men were not feudal but commercial. They had as little in common with the mediæval baronage as with the territorial oligarchy of the eighteenth century. They bought land not for the sake of acquiring political influence or social consideration, but in order to make a fortune out of it. The agrarian revolution was unquestionably attended by grave social evils and by some degree of actual disorder; but it would be idle to deny that it contributed greatly to the prosperity of the country at large, and in particular to that of the middle classes who formed the backbone of the opposition to the Stuart Kings. The agrarian revolution was not the work of the Government, nor encouraged by it. On the contrary, the Statute Book is full of legislative enactments designed to restrain the practice of "enclosure," to encourage tillage, to prevent the destruction of "towns" and the eviction of peasants. But the legislature proved itself relatively impotent when confronted with a natural economic tendency. The amount of land actually laid down to pasture in the sixteenth century has probably been exaggerated; still it was sufficient to cause a great deal of inconvenience and some real suffering to the cottars and labourers who were evicted to make room for sheep:

"Commons to close and kepe,
Pore folk for bread to cry and wepe,
Townes pulled down to pasture shepe,
This ys the new gyse."

Such was the burden of much of the popular literature of the day.

Nor was the period transitional and critical only as regards the internal situation. European politics entered with the sixteenth century, upon an entirely new phase: the national system began to supersede the œcumenical; the idea of unity bequeathed to Europe by the Roman Empire and preserved, to a limited extent, by the Holy Roman Empire and the Catholic Church, was giving place to the idea of a congeries of independent nation-states. The idea of a political equilibrium, of a balance of power between nominal equals, originally invented by the state-craft of the Italian cities, began to be applied to the nation-states into which the peoples of continental Europe were gradually grouping themselves. England had long since attained national unity, but not until the last years of the fifteenth century did France attain complete nationhood, and the first King of a united Spain was the Emperor Charles V.

The formation of large, homogeneous, compact and self-conscious nation-states soon led to international rivalry. The era of international wars, of international commerce, of international diplomacy, began. From the end of the fifteenth century until the beginning of the eighteenth, France and Spain, Bourbon and Habsburg, were almost continuously at war. England, smaller, poorer and weaker than either, discovered her interest in the maintenance of a balance between the two great continental powers. This was the keynote of the diplomacy of Henry VII, of Wolsey, of Queen Elizabeth, and later of William III. A Henry VIII, in the splendid audacity of lusty

youth, might aspire to rivalry; he might momentarily dream of putting himself forward as a candidate for the Imperial throne, but the more sober exponents of English policy looked not to European primacy or even to equality with the two dominant Powers; they were content to hold the scales tolerably even between them. To Wolsey Bishop Creighton ascribes a somewhat higher rôle: that of mediator rather than of makeweight; but on the whole, the maintenance of the balance was the ideal of English foreign policy in the sixteenth century. In the latter half of the century that balance was seriously threatened by the predominance of Spain. In the main, therefore, Queen Elizabeth inclined towards France, though never so far as to commit herself without reserve, either matrimonially or politically. The outbreak of insurrection in the Netherlands came as a god-send to the English Queen at a highly critical point in the fortunes of her country, and she used the weapon thus placed in her hands with consummate adroitness and effect.

The growing antagonism between England and Spain began, meanwhile, to assume a larger aspect. The rivalry of the two peoples was not confined to Europe. The union of Portugal and Spain (1580) exposed to the attacks of the Dutch the rich Portuguese empire in the East Indies. Simultaneously and with ever increasing audacity the English buccaneers menaced the Spanish monopoly in the West. Of all the manifestations of the new spirit that was working in the England of the sixteenth century, there were none more characteristic, and none more heavily fraught with consequences of permanent import to

the English race and to mankind, than the new born zeal for maritime adventure, and the quickened interest in overseas trade. The Englishmen of the middle ages were not conspicuous either as seamen or as merchants. Not until the reign of Henry VIII did England possess a permanent navy ; an annual voyage to Bordeaux for wine, another to Iceland for ling and cod represented the activities of the mercantile marine. In the last years of the sixteenth century, Italian mariners sailed from Bristol and took their part in the work of transatlantic discoveries, initiated by another Italian mariner in the service of Spain. But between the work of the Cabots and that of Columbus there was a significant contrast. Spain followed up with steady enthusiasm the initial success won for her by an Italian mariner ; England did not. England, in truth, was not in a position to do so ; she had neither ships nor sailors, and, after the exhausting wars, foreign and domestic, of the fifteenth century, she was far too listless to embark upon distant and dangerous enterprises. She lacked both the impulse and the means. Politically and constitutionally, in all that pertained to the achievement of national unity and the realization of national identity, she was far ahead of any other European nation ; intellectually, economically, and commercially she was one of the most backward. Nor is this remarkable when we remember that for many centuries the Mediterranean and the countries on its shores had been the nerve-centre of the world's intellect, the highway of world commerce, and that England had consequently been the *ultima Thule* of European civilization.

The conquest of Constantinople and Egypt by the Ottoman Turks, and their domination over the Eastern Mediterranean, transformed the situation. The old paths of commerce were blocked, and from Portugal, Spain and England intrepid mariners, mostly Italian in blood, set forth to discover a new route to the East, with the continuity of which the Turks could not interfere. Of this quest the rounding of the Cape of Good Hope, the opening of the sea route to India, and the unexpected discovery of the West Indies and the American continent were the immediate and direct results. In the fruits of these discoveries England ultimately obtained her full share. Her own geographical situation was profoundly modified. She was no longer on the outer circumference of the commercial world; she became, before long, its natural centre. The Mediterranean, hitherto the main stream of trade, degenerated into a mere backwater. The Turk converted it into a *cul de sac*. The metaphor may be varied, but the fact remains that the centre of commercial gravity had shifted from the shores of the Mediterranean to those of the Atlantic; London and Bristol gained what Venice and Genoa lost.

The first fruits of the geographical renaissance were reaped, however, not by England, but, deservedly, by Portugal and Spain; France and even Holland were, in commercial activity, ahead of England. Contracted as was her area, it more than sufficed for her scanty population. There was, therefore, no economic pressure towards colonisation, and she lacked the material equipment. Things improved slowly under Henry VIII, who devoted both thought

and money to the development of English shipping; under his patronage a few sporadic voyages of discovery were undertaken by individuals, but the nation as a whole was curiously uninterested and lethargic. Some strong motive, some general impulse was clearly necessary before England would rouse herself to buy up the opportunity presented to her by the geographical discoveries of Columbus, Vasco da Gama and the Cabots.

The lacking stimulus was supplied in the reign of Elizabeth. English sea-power, as Froude has said, "is the legitimate child of the Reformation." So long as England owed allegiance to the Papacy she was compelled to respect the monopoly conceded by it to Portugal and Spain. From the new world she was warned off by the famous Bull of Alexander VI. Only when she became a heretic did she cease to be a trespasser. The ecclesiastical settlement of 1559 marked the close of the one era and the opening of another. A new lust for maritime adventure combined with Protestant zeal and commercial ambition to incite Englishmen to a sustained attack upon Philip II. Queen Elizabeth, conscious of the weakness of her diplomatic position, had no mind for official war with Spain. Nevertheless she was quick to perceive the advantages of privateering. The sea-dogs might take the risks; she would reap the fruits. Without involving the Queen or the country in responsibility the Elizabethan sailors, the Hawkinses, the Drakes, the Frobishers, and the rest, half-crusaders, half buccaneers, inflicted innumerable pin-pricks upon Philip of Spain.

For nearly thirty years Philip, not free from

embarrassments of his own, preferred to endure those pin-pricks rather than involve himself in open war with Elizabeth. But the death of Mary Stuart cleared up the European situation ; Drake's audacity became unendurable, and at last the great Armada sailed.

The defeat and dispersal of the Armada was an event of the first historical significance. It marked the climax of the sixteenth century ; it provided the solution of its crucial problem ; it brought to a close the Tudor dictatorship. By 1588 the Tudors had done their work. Thanks to their consummate tact, to their political insight, to their intuitive sympathy with their people, and above all to their firm rule, the nation had passed through the crises of the sixteenth century, not merely unscathed, but invigorated and disciplined and well prepared to take upon itself the grave responsibilities of self-government. Already a new spirit of independence had begun to manifest itself in parliament ; between the Queen and the Commons there were differences of opinion on many questions ; but on neither side was there a disposition to carry matters to extremities; differences were not permitted to develope into disputes. No one, however, who reads the Apology drawn up in 1604 can doubt that out of deference for the Queen's " sex and age which [Parliament] had great cause to tender " the inevitable struggle had been consciously postponed. Had the Stuarts been models of prudence and tact they could hardly have avoided a quarrel with Parliament ; devoted, as they were, to a theory of monarchy, philosophically untenable and practically mischievous, they were likely enough to bring the country, as they did, to the abyss

of revolution. But while Shakspeare was writing his chronicle plays, these things were still hidden in the womb of time. Writing when he did, Shakspeare could hardly have escaped the contagion of patriotic enthusiasm which filled the hearts of Elizabethan Englishmen. A great crisis in our history had been safely past; and the heart of the nation welled up in gratitude to the great Queen who, at the height of the storm, had kept a firm hand on the helm and had brought the ship of state safely into port.

At this point, if not before, a question may well have obtruded itself: what has all this to do with Shakspeare, or his play, if his it be, of *Henry VIII*? What did Shakspeare reck of the Renaissance or the Reformation; of the agrarian revolution and the Tudor Dictatorship; of Puritanism and Parliaments; of the European equilibrium and the Elizabethan adventurers; of the revolt of the Netherlands or the defeat of the Armada? Did these things affect, in the remotest degree, Shakspeare's reading of English history, his delineation of historical characters, his outlook upon politics, or his reflections upon life?

The implied criticism is superficially justified, yet these preliminary observations are not, it is submitted, irrelevant. Shakspeare, it is true, was no mere insular Englishman, but a citizen of the world; he wrote not for an age but for all time. But though his appeal is universal and his outlook wholly devoid of insularity, yet no one was ever inspired by a more ardent love for his own country and there never existed a poet who was more emphatically and indisputably the product of his own time. In all his

plays he reveals himself as the child of Renaissance England, but in none of them does he reflect more luminously and more unmistakably the spirit of his own age than in the great series of dramas founded upon English history.

To that series *Henry VIII* supplies a fitting epilogue. But is *Henry VIII* Shakspeare's work? Critical questions are for the most part outside the scope of this book, and are confessedly beyond the competence of its author. But in regard to the authorship of *Henry VIII* the question is too intrusive to be wholly ignored. The destructive critics are not, however, agreed among themselves. The most extreme hold the view that Shakspeare had no part at all in the writing of the play. Some assign it wholly to Fletcher; others maintain that though two hands are clearly discernible, neither was Shakspeare's; a third party ascribes it conjointly to Shakspeare and Fletcher. The last view is that which finds perhaps the most powerful support among critics of repute. Mr. Spedding,* for example, is not only positive as to the main conclusion, but is prepared to discriminate with precision between the portions of the play assignable to the two hands. To Shakspeare he assigns only the first two Scenes of Act I; the third and fourth of Act II; a part of the second scene of Act III; the rest of the play he assigns to Fletcher. Students of the play will perceive that this division gives to Fletcher all the finest and most celebrated scenes and speeches: Buckingham's farewell; the great scene between Wolsey, Campeius and Katharine; Katharine's death scene; Wolsey's

* New Shakspeare Soc., Trans: 1874,

famous " Farewell " and Cranmer's prediction as to the future greatness of England under the rule of the royal infant, the Princess Elizabeth. To this wholesale surrender the more conservative critics, like Hudson and Halliwell-Phillipps, decline altogether to assent. They do not deny the dual authorship, nor question the fact that Fletcher had a share in the composition of the play, but they justly point out that the application of the metrical test may be carried too far. That the versification of *Henry VIII* does differ widely from that of the earlier plays cannot be denied, most conspicuously in the addition of an eleventh syllable. This and other peculiarities of the verse are all characteristic of Fletcher. If, however, we adopt the generally accepted view that *Henry VIII* was written as late as 1612—a good dozen years after *Henry V*—there is nothing very remarkable in this discrepancy or development. Mr. Watkiss Lloyd, an exceedingly sane critic, offers another pertinent explanation. " The same principle," he writes, " which induced Shakspeare to adhere in a play of modern subject to the truth of History, and to copy stage directions for pageants literally from the Chronicle governed his versification which frequently approaches as nearly to the prose of ordinary intercourse, as verse well may. The lines end, with unusual frequency, with insignificant words and particles, the pause is constantly carried far towards the end of the line. The construction of periods is elliptical and parenthetical to a degree that only the inflection of conversation, but that perfectly, renders smooth and intelligible." Mr. Watkiss Lloyd admits that large portions of the

play are written in the style of Fletcher rather than in Shakspeare's usual manner, but he insists that a "larger consideration of the acts and scenes thus condemned, their organic dependence in spirit as well as detail on the central conception of the piece, nay a moment's thought of their creative and poetic value and sustained consistency of taste as compared with any extract of like length from Fletcher"* should serve to convince even the sceptics that the hand of Shakspeare is predominant throughout.

Swinburne expresses himself to the same effect with characteristic vehemence and with deep disdain for the "higher criticism":

"This supposition," he writes, "of a double authorship is naturally as impossible to refute as to establish by other than internal evidence and appeal to the private judgment or perception of the reader. But it is no better than the last resource of an empiric; the last refuge of a sciolist; a refuge which the soundest of scholars will be slowest to seek, a resource which the most competent of critics will be least ready to adopt. Once admitted as a principle of general application, there are no lengths to which it may not carry, there are none to which it has not carried, the audacious fatuity and the arrogant incompetence of tamperers with the authentic text."†

The materials for the play were obtained mainly from Holinshed, but some use was made, it would seem, of Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*, and possibly of

* *Essays*, p. 316.

† *A Study of Shakspeare*, p. 18; but Swinburne himself acknowledges the intrusion of a second hand in some of the plays; e.g., in *Pericles*, *Titus Andronicus*, *Timon of Athens* and *Henry VI.*

an earlier drama on the subject of Cardinal Wolsey, written by Chettle and others not later than 1601-2. The manuscript of Cavendish's *Life of Wolsey* may also, perhaps, have been laid under contribution.

The action covers a period of thirteen years, from the beginning of the proceedings against the Duke of Buckingham in 1520, down to the baptism of the Princess Elizabeth in 1533, though, with characteristic carelessness as to chronology it includes (Act V, Scene 2) the appearance of Cranmer before the Council, an event which belongs to the year 1544. In construction the drama is exceptionally loose and disjointed ; it may almost, indeed, be said to consist of a series of detached episodes ; interest is concentrated upon a succession of individuals. King Henry himself supplies the main link between different episodes and different characters, but it is not a particularly strong one. Down to the first scene of the second act the Duke of Buckingham is the central figure of the drama. His execution leaves the stage open for another ; Wolsey fills it for a time, only to share it, as the Divorce question developes, with the unhappy Queen, Katharine of Aragon. Before the play closes the attention of the spectator is turned abruptly from the Catholic past to the Protestant future. Wolsey has gone ; Katharine has gone ; it is upon Archbishop Cranmer, upon Anne Boleyn, and above all, upon Anne Boleyn's daughter, the Lady Elizabeth, that interest is in the concluding scene concentrated.

The first scene supplies a link with the previous Chronicle Plays, which had dealt with the drama of Lancaster and York. The Wars of the Roses had

wrought great havoc in the ranks of the baronage. So much so that only twenty-nine lay Peers attended the first Parliament of Henry VII. Greatly diminished in numbers, the baronage was even more attenuated in power and prestige. That attenuation was conspicuously favourable to the establishment of the New Monarchy. But there still survived families and individuals sufficiently powerful to excite the suspicion of Henry VIII, and still more of the all-powerful Cardinal. Among such families the Nevilles, the Howards and the Staffords were not the least conspicuous. As the play opens representatives of these three houses—George Neville, Lord Abergavenny, Thomas Howard Duke of Norfolk, and Edward Stafford, Duke of Buckingham—are observed in earnest conference. The Norfolk of this play was the Earl of Surrey of *Richard III*, his father John, having been killed at Bosworth. This present Duke was famous as the victor of Flodden ; but he must have been not less skilful as a diplomatist than as a soldier, for despite the fact that he married Anne, the third daughter of Edward IV, he was permitted to die in his bed (1524). Edward Stafford, Duke of Buckingham, was less clever or less fortunate. He was the son of Henry the Duke of Buckingham of *Richard III*, and his eldest daughter, Elizabeth, was married to the Earl of Surrey, Norfolk's eldest son, and father of the Surrey who perished on the scaffold in 1547. Buckingham's youngest daughter, Mary, was married to Abergavenny. Such connections were eminently characteristic of the fifteenth century baronage which was more of a close and exclusive caste than at any period of English history, before or

since. They afforded, moreover, some excuse for the suspicions of Wolsey, and for the policy persistently pursued by his master towards the great nobles.

The conversation of the three lords turns upon the recent meeting of the English and French Kings on the Field of the Cloth of Gold, and from that, by an easy transition upon the man

> " who did guide—
> I mean, who set the body and the limbs
> Of this great sport together."
>
> . . . . . .
>
> " The right reverend Cardinal of York."

The mere mention of Wolsey's name is enough to call forth expletives from Buckingham. His kinsman, Norfolk, warns him of the danger he runs from the enmity of the all potent minister :

> " The State takes notice of the private difference
> Betwixt you and the Cardinal."

Buckingham restrains himself with the utmost difficulty, convinced as he is that the " butcher's cur " is not merely " venom-mouthed " as regards himself, but as a statesman and a diplomatist " as prone to mischief, as able to perform't." Bent on denouncing this traitor to the King, he is himself arrested on a charge of high treason, and committed to the Tower along with his son-in-law, Abergavenny.

The second scene shows us the King in conference with Wolsey ; but the conference is interrupted by the entrance of Queen Katharine, who comes to warn her lord that there is bitter discontent,

and some actual suffering, among his people, in consequence of impositions laid upon them by the minister. With the facts as to the fiscal grievances—ante-dated, however, by four years—Shakspeare was supplied by Holinshed; for the introduction of the Queen he is alone responsible. Her intervention, on behalf of the people oppressed by the minister, is not only an effective dramatic touch, it supplies an easily intelligible motive for the rancour with which Katharine is, later on, pursued by the offended Cardinal. From Holinshed, too, Shakspeare got the facts as to the fall of Buckingham, but it is noticeable that in making the King personally examine Buckingham's surveyor, Shakspeare keeps closer to the facts of history than the chronicler himself.* Buckingham's real crime rested upon the fact that in the Beaufort branch of the Lancastrian line he was next heir to Henry and "next legitimate representative of Edward III after the children of Clarence."† Holinshed tells us that he was indicted of high treason "for certain words spoken at Blechinglie to the lord of Aburgauennie; and therewith was the same lord attached for concelement." Wolsey's personal malice may have had some effect in hurrying on his downfall, but essentially it was due to the insecurity of the dynasty, to the lack of a male heir, and to the King's consequent jealousy against all those who were in any degree akin to him in blood. The surveyor declared, according to Holinshed, that a certain monk had warned Buckingham that "neither the

* Cf. Brewer: *Reign of Henry VIII*, i, 383. "We have indisputable evidence that it [the examination] was conducted by the King in person."

† Courtenay, *Op. cit.*, II, 129.

King nor his heirs should prosper and that I (the Duke) should indeuour myselfe to purchase the good wils of the Communaltie of England; for I the same Duke and my blood should prosper and have the rule of the realme of England." Here, as in an earlier speech (Act I, Scene 2), Shakspeare reproduces the language of the chronicle:

> " It would infect his speech, that if the King
> Should without issue die, he'll carry it so
> To make the Sceptre his: these very words
> I've heard him utter to his son-in-law,
> Lord Abergavenny."

No further proof was needed to ensure his condemnation. After his great speech in Act II, Scene 1. Buckingham disappears from the scene, and with his disappearance the first episode of this disjointed drama comes to an end.

But already we have been prepared for the second. At the masque arranged in his honour by the Cardinal at York House (Act I, Scene 4) the King had met, and fallen violently in love with, Anne Boleyn. For this meeting there is no historical warrant, but it supplies a sufficient dramatic motive for the second episode of the play. This hinges upon the Divorce question.

The first hint of coming trouble is given in a conversation between two gentlemen (Act II, Scene 1):

> " Did you not of late days hear
> A buzzing of a separation
> Between the King and Katharine?

. . . . . It grows again
Fresher than e'er it was; and held for certain
The King will venture at it. Either the Cardinal,
Or some about him near, have, out of malice
To the good Queen, possess'd him with a scruple
That will undo her."

A second gentleman confirms the rumour and supplies a further motive:

" 'Tis the Cardinal;
And merely to revenge him on the Emperor
For not bestowing on him, at his asking,
The archbishopric of Toledo, this is purpos'd."

Such is the gossip of the streets. It is confirmed, in the next scene, upon higher authority. The Lord Chamberlain (Charles Somerset, Earl of Worcester, presumably), in conversation with the Dukes of Norfolk and Suffolk, reports the King to be " full of sad thoughts and troubles," and in answer to a question as to the cause of the trouble, he replies:

" It seems, the marriage with his brother's wife
Has crept too near his conscience."

Suffolk has another explanation to offer. " No, his conscience has crept too near another lady." Norfolk insists that " This is the Cardinal's doing, the King-Cardinal." But in private conference with the Cardinal Henry ascribes it wholly to the prickings of conscience.

" O, my lord,
Would it not grieve an able man to leave

So sweet a bed-fellow? But, conscience, conscience—
O, 'tis a tender place! And I must leave her."

The very next scene gives us a glimpse of Anne Boleyn herself in confidential converse with an old lady of the Court. *Nolo episcopari* represents her attitude to a nicety:

"By my troth and maidenhead
I would not be a Queen."

But the receipt of a message from the King intimating that he has created her Marchioness of Pembroke with a pension of "a thousand pound a year, annual support," gives her to think.

To this bit of comedy there succeeds one of the finest scenes in the play, a scene of pure tragedy: the arraignment of Katharine before Wolsey and Campeius at Blackfriars. This and the other scenes (notably the second scene of Act IV), in which Katharine appears have evoked enthusiastic praise from critics widely diverse in temperament. "Katharine of Aragon," writes Mrs. Jameson, "may rank as the triumph of Shakspeare's genius and his wisdom. There is nothing in the whole range of poetical fiction resembling or approaching her." Dr. Johnson's tribute is hardly more restrained. "The meek sorrows and virtuous distress of Katharine have furnished some scenes which may be justly numbered among the greatest efforts of tragedy." Nor would Shakspeare's delineation seem to be in any degree exaggerated, or the praise of Mrs. Jameson and Dr. Johnson undeserved.

Shakspeare's account of the suit before the

Legatine Commission at Blackfriars deserves attention on more grounds than one. The Queen points to Wolsey as her " most malicious foe : "

" You are mine enemy ; and make my challenge
You shall not be my judge : for it is you
Have blown this coal betwixt my lord and me."

Wolsey denies the charge and appeals to the King, who not only confirms Wolsey's own denial but goes further :

" You ever
Have wished the sleeping of this business ; never
Desired it to be stirred ; but oft have hindered, oft
The passages made toward it."

Having cleared Wolsey, the King then proceeds to give his own version of the matter. He declares that his own scruples as to the validity of his marriage with his brother's widow were first roused by the Bishop of Bayonne (or Tarbès). The Bishop, on coming as ambassador from France to arrange a marriage between the Duke of Orleans and the Princess Mary, had raised, point blank, a question as to the legitimacy of the Princess. The question once raised, Henry's conscience gave him no peace. All his Queen's male issue had been still-born or had died in infancy. He saw in this the judgement of Heaven. He began to be concerned as to the succession to the crown :

" I weighed the danger which my realms stood in
By this my issue's fail."

How far does the King's explanation accord with the ascertained facts of history? One doubt may be dissipated at once. Shakspeare, at any rate, was writing in perfect good faith. He followed the best available authority—Hall—and the most brilliant of modern historians has, with less excuse, gone to the same source. Froude's account of the matter is substantially identical with Hall's and Shakspeare's. Modern scholars are not content, however, with the explanation which satisfied Hall, Shakspeare, and Froude. Shakspeare, it will be noted, implicitly exonerates Wolsey. Until quite recent years the popular and indeed the scientific verdict has tended to implicate the proud Cardinal of York. Some have ascribed his attitude to mere personal grudge against Queen Katharine, and that the two strong wills frequently clashed, there is abundant evidence to prove. Wolsey's relations with Katharine of Aragon would seem, indeed, to have resembled closely those of Bismarck with the Crown Princess (afterwards the Empress) Frederick of Prussia. Others, including some of the gossips in *Henry VIII*, assign as the leading motive, the disappointment of Wolsey's hopes in regard to the Papal throne. This view is expressly repudiated by one of the most careful of Wolsey's biographers, Bishop Creighton. Wolsey had, it is true, his own reasons, and they were strong ones, for desiring a breach with the Emperor Charles V, but they were the reasons, less of a disappointed churchman than of a cautious diplomatist. A great churchman Wolsey was, but modern research tends to establish the conclusion that he was even more pre-eminent as a European diplomatist, the first and

one of the greatest of our Foreign Ministers. Not that this view is incompatible with that which assigns to Wolsey a leading share in the Divorce business. On the contrary, Ranke holds that Wolsey promoted that business mainly in order to facilitate a reversal of the European alliances.

Hitherto Henry VIII, despite dalliance with Francis I, had, on the whole, inclined to the side of his nephew-by-marriage, the Emperor Charles V. After the victory of Francis at Marignano (1515) and before his defeat at Pavia (1525) the European equilibrium appeared to be threatened rather by the predominance of France than by that of the Austro-Spanish Habsburgs. The Emperor's victory at Pavia reversed the position, and Wolsey was quick to appreciate the fact. That he inclined to a French alliance, after 1525, is beyond question. Was this inclination responsible for the initiation of the Divorce proceedings ?

That question can now be answered by an emphatic negative. The facts conclusively rebut the idea. They are equally opposed to Henry's own explanation, recorded by Hall, and popularized by Shakspeare, to the effect that the whole question was in the first instance raised by the doubts thrown by the French ambassador upon the legitimacy of the Princess Mary. " Of this first notion," writes Hall, " grew much business or it were ended." This categorical statement must now be assigned to the limbo of official fabrications. Professor Brewer has finally disposed of it, and has shown by reference to the documents that " not a whisper escaped, not a doubt

was expressed of Mary's legitimacy by the French ambassadors." *

But what if it had been? How would the doubt have helped Henry's case? The visit of the Bishop of Tarbès to England took place in March, 1527. Clark, the English agent in Rome, was instructed to open negotiations for a Divorce at least as early as 1526†.

Must Anne Boleyn, then, bear the sole responsibility? That view would be the simplest, were it not wholly opposed to probabilities, and conclusively rebutted by facts. At the age of twelve, Anne Boleyn went to France as maid of honour to the French Queen, and not until the year 1522 did she appear at the English Court. She was then a girl of fifteen or sixteen, and then or soon afterwards Henry fell in love with her. There is, however, no reason to suppose that she was more exigeante than her sister Mary, who was already the King's mistress. The explanation of the Divorce proceedings must, therefore, be sought elsewhere.

Out of a mass of research two or three points emerge with tolerable certainty. The first is that doubts had, from the first, been alleged as to the validity of Henry's marriage with his brother's relict. Pope Julius II had indeed granted a dispensation, but it is not certain that he had the power, in the particular case, to do so; nor is it certain that the facts were fully disclosed to him. Archbishop Warham would seem, from the first, to have been opposed, on canonical grounds, to the marriage. Then came the loss of

* Brewer: *Reign of Henry VIII*, ii, 144. This is confirmed, though more cautiously, by Pollard: *Henry VIII*, p. 195.

† Brewer: ii, 163; Pollard says February.

children. Between 1510 and 1514 four were born to the royal couple, but not one lived, and as early as August, 1514, the Venetian ambassador at Rome reported current gossip to the effect that " the King of England means to repudiate his present wife, the daughter of the King of Spain and his brother's widow, because he is unable to have children by her, and intends to marry a daughter of the French Duke of Bourbon." But in February, 1516, the Princess Mary was born and lived, and Henry was encouraged to hope for a male heir. In November, 1518, the last of Katharine's many children was, however, born dead. That Henry was deeply affected, in conscience, by the death of these children there is no reason whatever to doubt. The Levitical law had forbidden a marriage such as his, and had prescribed the penalty which had, in fact, fallen upon him.

The King was affected also by high considerations of State; and not without reason. The position of the dynasty had become precarious in the extreme. The idea of a Queen-Regnant in England was unheard of.* The succession question became a matter of current discussion. The Venetian ambassador in London reports, in 1519, that the claims of various noblemen were already being canvassed: the Duke of Norfolk in right of his wife, a daughter of Edward IV; Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk, the King's own brother-in-law; and, most persistently, and, as we have seen, most fatally to himself, the Duke of Buckingham. So serious was the

* Queen Matilda may be regarded as an exception which proves the rule.

matter that in 1525 Henry bestowed upon his illegitimate son, born to him by Elizabeth Blount, the significant title of Duke of Richmond and Somerset. But meanwhile Anne Boleyn had appeared upon the scene. Passion and policy combined to suggest the desirability of a legitimate heir. The English Divines were consulted; Wolsey's interest was engaged by the prospect of effecting a reversal of his continental alliances, and there was little reason to apprehend difficulties at Rome.

But it was at Rome that the project miscarried. Pope Clement VII found himself confronted by a serious dilemma. Under ordinary circumstances the divorce would have gone through as a matter of course; but how could Clement VII set aside the dispensation granted by his predecessor without injury to the prestige of the Papacy? Nor was he, after 1525, a free agent. The Emperor Charles V was supreme in Italy and virtually master of Rome. But in May, 1527, an attempt was made to effect a domestic settlement of the "King's business." A collusive action was entered against the King. The Archbishops, Warham and Wolsey, responsible for the observance of ecclesiastical law within the realm of England, called upon King Henry to justify himself before them, "forasmuch as he was living in defiance of the Levitical prohibition in wedlock with his brother's widow." Henry was thus made to appear as the defendant. But the collusive action came to nothing. In the same year Rome was actually sacked by the Imperial troops and the Pope found himself a prisoner in the hands of the Emperor in the castle of St. Angelo. In December he managed

to escape, and in the following year he issued a commission to Cardinals Wolsey and Campeggio (Campeius), but the decree was defeated, partly by the firmness and courage of Queen Katharine, partly by the progress of events in Italy upon which Pope Clement naturally waited. Those events turned all in favour of the Imperialists; consequently, on July 19th, 1529, the case was finally revoked to Rome.

From that moment Wolsey's fate was sealed. He had pinned his faith upon the Pope. The Pope had finally gone over to the opposition; Anne Boleyn had long been working assiduously against the minister; the Norfolk party was steadily gaining ground at Court, while the whole of the diplomatic edifice so carefully reared by Wolsey was tumbling down like a house of cards. The revocation of the divorce suit to Rome completed his ruin. The King lent a ready ear to the advice of those who had all along suggested an easier and quicker means of solving the difficulty than that which had commended itself to a conservative churchman like the Cardinal; a writ of Praemunire was issued against Wolsey in October; on the 16th he was deprived of the Great Seal; a new "ministry," headed by Norfolk, Suffolk and Sir Thomas More (as Chancellor) came into power; writs had already been issued for the election of a new Parliament, and on November 3rd, 1529, the "Reformation" Parliament met.

With the work of that famous Parliament Shakspeare does not concern himself; nor must it detain us. From this point onwards Shakspeare's narrative of events is very highly compressed, and the result is

considerable confusion, many anachronisms, and actual blunders not a few, though not of very serious import. The fine scene in the Queen's apartment in the palace of Bridewell (Act III, Scene 1), when the Cardinals Wolsey and Campeius endeavoured to induce Katharine to surrender quietly, was suggested to Shakspeare by Holinshed who got his materials from Cavendish's *Life of Wolsey*; but here, as always, Shakspeare makes the Queen appear to great advantage as compared with Wolsey. Repulsed by the Queen, Wolsey has now to deal with the King. With the latter he has little chance, for the King has discovered not only his double dealing with Rome, but evidence of personal peculation on his part. In regard to the first Shakspeare has the authority of Holinshed. "He (Wolsey) required the Pope by letters and secret messengers, that in anie wise he should defer to the judgment of his divorse, till he might frame the King's mind to his purpose." That purpose was, according to Holinshed, that the King should marry not Anne Boleyn but, with a view to strengthening the alliance with France, the Duchess of Alençon, the French King's sister. As a fact, Margaret, Duchess of Alençon had married Henry of Navarre some two years before the time to which this scene refers. But the confusion of dates in this portion of the play is too flagrant to allow of extrication. It is declared in the same scene by the Lord Chamberlain that "the King already hath married the fair lady" Anne. That marriage did not take place, according to Holinshed until November, 1532, and the best authorities favour an even later date. In the midst of confusions of such moment it

is relatively a small matter that the Norfolk who appears in this scene is confused with his father, who died in 1524. Nor is there any ascertained warrant for the suggestion that the cup of Henry's wrath against Wolsey was finally filled up by the chance discovery among papers of State of an inventory of his household possessions "at such proud rate, that it outspeaks possession of a subject."

Yet such matters do not detract from the essential truth of the dramatic portraiture; and there are few things finer in the whole range of the Chronicle Plays than the scenes depicting Wolsey's fall. In the enumeration of the items of the accusation brought against the Cardinal, Shakspeare closely follows Holinshed; as he does in the famous speech: "If I had served God as diligentlie as haue doone the King, he would not haue given me ouer in my greie haires." Holinshed's own account is borrowed from Cavendish.

Thus Wolsey passes out of the play; the episode in which he has played the leading part is closed. To Wolsey, Shakspeare, like most of his contemporaries, was less than just. He was, perhaps, too near the man and to the scenes in which he played his part to see them in their true perspective. Yet the delineation of the proud Cardinal, whether historical or not, is superb. Arrogant, overbearing, and self-seeking, pitiless in revenge upon those who thwarted his will or disdained his person, he moves through the first part of the play with splendid assurance and not without some real dignity. His sudden fall reveals another side of his character, and the picture of

Wolsey in abject humiliation would extract pity from a stone.

But of the real psychology of Wolsey we learn little from Shakspeare, and still less of his essential place in English history. That place is a peculiar one. Wolsey stands, in pre-eminent degree, at the parting of the ways. He was the last of the long line of great statesmen-ecclesiastics to whom in the middle ages England owed so profound a debt. He was the first English diplomatist who played a conspicuous and influential part in continental politics. In his domestic policy he belonged to a swiftly-vanishing past; his foreign policy was the resultant of forces which belong no less clearly to the future. He was not fitted, either by temperament or training, to play the part of a responsible adviser to a constitutional sovereign. He was a wholehearted believer in the beneficence of the Tudor dictatorship, and all his great gifts he placed freely at the disposal of the dictator. His ecclesiastical policy was such as befitted a progressive and reforming Conservative; he knew, no man better, how largely the Church had lost the veneration and affection of the people, and how far it had gone to forfeit it; but he knew also—again no man better—how deep its roots had struck into the soil of the national tradition, and how great was its opportunity, if only it could be induced to buy it up. The pruning hook was needed, but not the axe; and he would have freely used the one to avert recourse to the other. Like many of the greatest of his predecessors, William of Wykeham, for example, and William of Waynflete, Wolsey had a genuine belief in education, and was deeply concerned to promote

it. Like Wykeham and Henry VI, he desired to associate his memory with the foundation of a great Oxford college, to be maintained in perpetual and organic connection with a great public school. Had he lived to complete his plans, Christ Church would have stood in the same relation to Ipswich School, as New College to Winchester, and King's College to Eton.

It is, however, as a diplomatist, as the director of English policy on the continent, that Wolsey would, we may suppose, have desired to be judged. In this department of his activities he stands out as a unique figure in a new age. For Wolsey was the first of European statesmen to grasp the idea, an idea subsequently developed by statesmen like Henry IV and William of Orange, of such an equilibrium of political forces, such a balance of power as would preserve the independence of the smaller states, and avert the ascendancy of any one great State. Wolsey was thinking primarily, of course, of England, as William III thought primarily of the United Provinces. But both were, in the Comptist sense, " good Europeans " ; each grasped the true meaning of the theory of a " balance of power," before that theory had been perverted into an excuse for annihilating independent States and subserving dynastic ambitions. The claim made on behalf of Wolsey by Dr. Brewer is, perhaps, extravagant : " unaided by fleets or armies, ill-supported by his master and by colleagues of very moderate abilities, he contrived by his individual energy to raise this country from a third-rate State into the highest circle of European politics." It is true that he obtained for his master, by

diplomacy, a position which enabled him to negotiate on equal terms with Francis I and the Emperor Charles V, but no one knew better than Wolsey that the equality he claimed rested upon a precarious balance of political forces and could be maintained only so long as they were nicely adjusted in his favour. More recent critics are, as a rule, less complimentary to Wolsey and his achievements, yet no one can deny that Wolsey was the founder of a diplomatic school in which, to the great advantage of her people, Queen Elizabeth afterwards graduated. But if Wolsey lives in English history it is not by reason of his achievements in diplomacy, which are essentially elusive; still less for his Churchmanship or his zeal for education; it is primarily because he was, with all his faults and weaknesses, a great personality. We have been taught that transmitted personality is the true test of greatness. Can it be denied that Wolsey responds to this test? What figure of the past looms larger in popular imagination? Dean Colet—to mention only contemporaries—was incomparably more important than Wolsey in the field of education: Warham was not inferior to him as a Churchman, yet what would Macaulay's schoolboys make of Warham or Colet, and which of them would fail to make something of Wolsey? But if Wolsey responds so triumphantly to the test, how much of his success must be ascribed to the fact that his full length portrait was painted by Shakspeare? That such portraiture is an element in the transmission of personality can hardly be questioned. To the play, then, we must return.

With Act IV we pass into an entirely new atmosphere, and interest is concentrated upon a new character. Incidentally we learn that the decree of divorce had been pronounced by a domestic tribunal, and that Henry VIII was thus left free to espouse Anne Boleyn. The first scene of the Act is not, however, strictly dramatic ; it partakes rather of the nature of a pageant designed to celebrate the coronation of the new Queen. The details of the coronation ceremony are taken from Holinshed, though Shakspeare departs from his original in substituting the Earl of Surrey and the Duke of Norfolk for the Earl of Arundel and Lord William Howard, a change due probably, as commentators have pointed out, to a desire to avoid, at this stage, the introduction of new characters.

In the second scene we are transported suddenly to Kimbolton, where the ex-Queen lay dying. On her death-bed she learns the news of Wolsey's death at Leicester. The anachronism is as notable as it is excusable, nay admirable. Wolsey's death (1530), preceded that of Queen Katharine (1536) by five years. But disregard of dates is excuseable on the ground that it gave Shakspeare the opportunity for one of the finest scenes in the play. Nor did he fail to redeem it. Dr. Johsnon declared this scene to be " above any other part of Shakspeare's tragedies, and perhaps above any scene of any other part, tender and pathetic," while Swinburne calls it " the crowning glory of the whole poem." These eulogies are not undeserved. The circumstances of Wolsey's end are faithfully reported to the Queen by Griffith, her gentleman-usher and privileged confidant. His recital

taken by Shakspeare almost verbatim from Holinshed, ends with the words :

" He gave his honours to the world again,
His blessed part to heaven, and slept in peace."

The good man's platitudes evoke from the Queen a natural and not undiscriminating outburst :

" So may he rest ; his faults lie gently on him !
Yet thus far, Griffith, give me leave to speak him,
And yet with charity. He was a man
Of an unbounded stomach, ever ranking
Himself with princes ; one that by suggestion,
Tied all the kingdom ; simony was fair to play :
His own opinion was his law : i' the presence
He would say untruths ; and be ever double
Both in his words and meaning : he was never,
But where he meant to ruin, pitiful :
His promises were, as he then was, mighty ;
But his performance as he is now, nothing ;
Of his own body he was ill, and gave
The clergy ill-example."

Griffith replies, with the Queen's frank permission, with a noble eulogy ; enlarging upon his humble origin ; his obvious predestination to greatness ; his ripe scholarship ; his munificent generosity :

" ever witness for him
Those twins of learning that he raised in you,
Ipswich and Oxford ! one of which fell with him,
Unwilling to outlive the good that did it ;
The other, though unfinish'd, yet so famous,
So excellent in art and still so rising,
That Christendom shall ever speak his virtue."

Well may the Queen wish for herself, after death, "no other herald, no other speaker of her (my) living actions, to keep her (mine) honour from corruption." Her end approached swiftly; but before it comes, there appears upon the stage a vision, representing the Queen's own dream, of "six personages, clad in white robes, wearing on their heads garlands of bays, and golden vizards on their faces; branches of bays or palm in their hands." Hardly have these "spirits of peace" disappeared when the dying Queen is recalled to the realities of material existence by the hasty intrusion of a messenger bringing from the King a message of sympathy and comfort. To this the Queen replies by a letter, already written, commending to the King "the model of our chaste loves, his young daughter"; her maids, for whom she beseeches the King to find husbands, and her other servants. The letter, as given in this scene, is almost verbally transcribed from the letter, touching and dutiful, yet nobly candid, which Lord Herbert of Cherbury has in his *History of Henry VIII* translated from Polydore Vergil. Thus Katharine, in turn, passes from the scene. The close conjunction of her death with that of the Cardinal is not the only anachronism of which, in this Act, Shakspeare is wisely guilty. The death of Katharine is made, for obvious dramatic purposes, to precede the birth of the Princess Elizabeth, whereas in historical fact, it occurred three years after the latter event. By this slight deviation from the real course of events, Shakspeare, as Mrs. Jameson justly observes, "has not perverted historic facts, but merely sacrificed them to a higher

principle; and in doing so has not only preserved dramatic propriety and heightened the poetical interest, but has given a strong proof both of his delicacy and his judgment."

There is, indeed, nothing in the play to suggest the Court flatterer. If the date of composition, generally accepted, be the correct one, there was no longer any reason for flattering the last of the Tudors. But the memory of the great Queen was still fragrant among her people, not the less so by reason of the fact that when the play was first performed they had had ten years' experience of the Stuarts; and it was essential to the popularity of the production that the closing scenes of the play should strike a note that would not jar. The play is brought to an end, therefore, with the christening of the Princess Elizabeth.

It must, however, be admitted that the last Act is dramatically weak and that, from an artistic point of view, it appears to be an anti-climax. To those who complain that the whole play is lacking in unity, either external or spiritual, this can hardly appear remarkable. In this lack of unity, superficially incontestable, many commentators have found a conclusive argument against the Shakspearean authorship of the play as a whole. Of such arguments this is undeniably the strongest.

For there is no other play written by Shakspeare in which, as Mr. Spedding has observed, "the moral sympathy of the spectator is not carried along with the main current of action to the end." In *Henry VIII* on the contrary "the strongest sympathies which have been awakened in us run opposite to the course of the action. Our sympathy is for the grief

and goodness of Queen Katharine, while the course of the action requires us to entertain as a theme of joy and compensatory satisfaction the Coronation of Anne Bullen and the birth of her daughter, which are, in fact, a part of Katharine's injury, and amount to little less then the ultimate triumph of wrong." That this criticism does call attention to a serious ethical defect in the play, even to an æsthetic defect, hardly admits of question. But Shakspeare's point of view was not primarily æsthetic or ethical. It may rather be described as national, or, in the true sense, political. He looked at these events through the eyes of a typical Englishman of the sixteenth century, a man who claimed to be, and was, above all else, a good citizen. What good citizen could have failed to rejoice in the birth of the Princess Elizabeth—a child, a potential heiress to the throne, whose legitimacy could not be legally questioned? Their sympathies, as men and women, might well go out to Katharine, an innocent victim of circumstances, if ever there was one. But, as citizens, they were disposed to rejoice in the fact that Henry was able to obtain, and to obtain at the hands of a domestic tribunal, the dissolution of a union, from which an heir to the throne could no longer be expected. In this, as in most like matters, Shakspeare unquestionably reflected the prevalent opinion among contemporaries, and reflecting it, he was naturally impelled to bring the play to an end with the christening of the Princess Elizabeth, and with a blessing, which was also a prophecy, from the lips of Archbishop Cranmer. This involved a further shifting of the interest of the spectator; it meant a new atmosphere, it meant

the introduction, in the very last Act of the play, of new characters, a procedure dramatically inexcuseable. But it is highly characteristic that in this, the last of the Chronicle Plays, Shakspeare should have been willing to subordinate æsthetic considerations to the demands of the patriotic drama.

The whole series may, indeed, be regarded as a single and coherent essay on Patriotism; but while there is, from the first to the last of the series, complete unity and consistency of spirit, there are marked differences in treatment and form. In *Richard III*, for instance, or *Richard II*, there is a certain rigidity and regularity both in structure and versification. These characteristics are much less conspicuous in the two parts of *Henry IV*, though even in that great drama there is a formal alternation of history and comedy. *Henry IV* and *Henry V* may be said to mark, as far as the Chronicle Plays are concerned, the meridian of Shakspeare's style. He has attained complete freedom in the use of materials; but there is no carelessness. In *Henry VIII* it is otherwise. There we seem to see freedom degenerating into license. As to form it is not so much carelessness, as *abandon*. To few men, whose output is abundant, is it given, in age, to maintain the precision of youth or the perfection of middle life. Some develope ungainly mannerisms; others become careless and slipshod. Yet, in the case of the greatest craftsmen, there are generally compensations. No one would exchange the ripe and calm philosophy of *The Tempest* for the youthful precision of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, and there are scenes in *Henry VIII* which cannot be matched in *Henry VI* or

Richard III. But the essential difference is a more subtle one. Shakspeare, like his royal mistress, was a child not of the Reformation but of the Renaissance, and none of the historical plays are so obviously suffused with the warm glow of the new spirit as that which deals with the reborn England of the sixteenth century. Nor are any of these dramas so entirely devoid of the didactic temper. Even the most pragmatical of commentators seem to find it difficult to deduce the " moral lessons " of this particular play. Mr. Hudson does, indeed, make a valiant attempt, but it is more valiant than successful. He insists that the moral effect of *Henry VIII* is " very impressive and very just." But what, on closer analysis does it amount to ? " The lesson evolved, so far as it admits of general statement may be said to stand in showing how sorrow makes sacred the wearer, and how, to our human feelings, suffering, if borne with true dignity and strength of soul covers a multitude of sins." It hardly needed the genius of a Shakspeare to enforce a moral so obvious and platitudinous. The moral, if moral there be, is not so much ethical as political ; its origin is to be sought not in the maxims of the copy-book but in those of Italian statecraft. Shakspeare subscribed to the doctrine of Machiavelli that Politics are divorced from Ethics ; that the laws of conduct prescribed to the Prince or statesman are not always the same as those which properly control the actions of private individuals. Queen Katharine is the innocent victim of untoward circumstances ; her unhappy lot may well evoke sympathy ; but political considerations frequently involve hardship and suffering to individuals : and a private

lapse from the highest standards of morality is sometimes justified on grounds of public policy.

It has been said again and again that in *Henry VIII* it is impossible to detect any unity of spirit. If the unity that is sought is ethical, the criticism is just.

But can it be asserted, with equal justice, of political unity? The play begins with the arrest of the Duke of Buckingham. What is the ground of his offence? Not that he crossed the path of Wolsey's ambition, but that he stands in near relation to the King; that his name has been mentioned as a possible candidate for the throne, should Henry die without heirs male. Thus the *leit-motif* of the play, indicated from the outset, is the question of the succession to the Crown. That same *motif* persists throughout the drama. The real interest of the central scenes turns upon the issue of the "King's business": will the Cardinal-Archbishop be able to induce the Pope to grant a Divorce? Wolsey stakes his whole reputation and career upon this one throw; and loses. On the divorce question itself Shakspeare takes no sides. Henry is permitted to state his case, as it was officially stated to the chronicler Hall, as it is borrowed from Hall by Froude. But Shakspeare is no partisan; he maintains an attitude of Olympian impartiality. That he, like every other patriotic Englishman of the time, realized the supreme importance of the succession question is clearly indicated in the play. But he did not, therefore, ignore the possibility that more ordinary motives might have operated in Henry's mind to the disadvantage of his elderly consort. The King's sudden passion for Anne Boleyn is emphasized; but are we to find in this the origin

of the divorce proceedings? There is no evidence that Shakspeare would have answered this question in the affirmative. Was the whole business due to the operation of a capricious conscience? The possibility is not negatived. The dramatist's attitude is purely judicial; the verdict is left to the jury. But even after Katharine's final disappearance, the succession question is kept well to the fore.

Opening with the arrest and execution of Buckingham, the play closes with the baptism of the Princess Elizabeth. The future of the dynasty is assured, if not in the male line, if not permanently, still in the person of one who had an intellect which males are wont to describe as masculine, and possessed, in addition, advantages which only a virgin Queen could have used in the interests of the country, and of the people whom she ruled and served.

That an Elizabethan dramatist should bring his last historical drama to this climax was wholly appropriate. The fifth act has been handled, as we have noted, very severely by the literary critics, and has not fared much better at the hands of the moralists. The second scene contains two glaring anachronisms. Cranmer's appearance before the Privy Council did not take place until 1544, eleven years later than the event recorded in the fourth scene; while Cromwell, who appears as Secretary to the Council in Scene 1, had, in fact, been executed three years before. But there was an excellent reason for this departure from historical sequence. I cannot go so far as Mr. Hudson, who writes in reference to this scene: "The passage yields the most pertinent and forcible instance of that steady support of

Cranmer by the King, which was necessary to prepare the way for the final establishment of the Reformation, on Elizabeth's coming to the Crown. And the main interest of the drama was clearly meant to turn on that renovation of mind and soul which was to take its beginnings from, or along with, the establishing of the Reformed faith."* Shakspeare, as I judge, had no such didactic purpose in mind. He reflected with admirable fidelity the many cross currents of opinion, theological and political, which were flowing in his day ; he did not allow himself to be carried away by any one of them. Least of all did he hold a brief for the Reformation. Like the great majority of his contemporaries, he would seem to have acquiesced in the workable compromise embodied in the Elizabethan settlement, but it is very doubtful whether he would have gone to the stake for Anglicanism, any more than for Calvinism, or for Roman Catholicism. The *via media* appealed to him in religion as in politics. On that path Queen Elizabeth walked with undeviating steps, if not with absolute conviction. The great mass of her subjects were content to walk with her, and of their general attitude towards theological questions Shakspeare is entirely typical.

If the considerations put forward in the preceding paragraphs be accepted, it is not necessary to go further to justify the fifth Act of *Henry VIII.* Moreover, much of the criticism which has been hurled at it is seen to be beside the point. Mr. Spedding's words fairly represent the prevalent opinion : " The interest," he writes, " instead of rising towards the

* *Op. cit.* ii, 179.

end, falls away utterly and leaves us in the last act among persons whom we scarcely know, and events for which we do not care." And again: "In point of design it seemed inconceivable that a judgement like his (Shakspeare's) could have been content with a conclusion so little in harmony with the prevailing spirit and purpose of the piece."

The justice of this comment obviously depends upon the view which is taken as to "the prevailing spirit and purpose of the piece." If the view taken in these pages be sound, the christening of the Princess, under whose sceptre the rule of the Tudor dynasty was destined to attain to the highest point of distinction and success, is not merely a fitting climax to this particular drama, but a most appropriate ending to the series of which *Henry VIII* supplies the last instalment.

When Shakspeare wrote *Henry VIII* the Tudor dictatorship was over; the circumstances which had called it into being had passed away; so thoroughly and so successfully had the Tudors done their work that they rendered unnecessary and indeed impossible the continuance of their dictatorial rule. Hence the extreme difficulty and complexity of the problems which the Tudors bequeathed to the Stuarts. Had those luckless Sovereigns possessed a tithe of the tact and insight of their predecessors they would have perceived that the day of the dictatorship was past. The defeat of the Armada was at once its completest vindication, and a clear indication that there was no longer need for it. The crisis was over. The nation had won through. The ship of State had sailed safely into port. For this auspicious result the good

seamanship of a succession of great captains was mainly responsible, and the nation gratefully recognized the fact. There was indeed much in the personal character both of Henry VII and Henry VIII that was ignoble; in Queen Elizabeth, along with many elements of real greatness, there were vanities and weaknesses and pettinesses which can only excite contempt. But to insist exclusively upon their shortcomings is to lose all sense of proportion and perspective. If it be the function of the faithful historian, without sacrificing accuracy of detail to grasp and set forth the meaning and significance of the picture as a whole, he will be constrained to depict the Tudor period not as that of an intrusive despotism, still less a blasting tyranny, but as a period of phenomenal national expansion under the guidance of a dictatorship which was, in its main lines, beneficent.

And the secret of Tudor success? He who runs may read. A high courage; an inflexible will; an intense and ardent patriotism. The insight of a great poet has enabled him to pass a penetrating judgment upon Queen Elizabeth. "The saving salt of Elizabeth's character with all its well-nigh incredible mixture of heroism and egotism, meanness and magnificence was simply this, that overmuch as she loved herself, she did yet love England better." What Swinburne has said of Elizabeth may be affirmed, on the whole, of the dynasty to which she belonged. The same ardent patriotism which inspired the Tudors was at once the theme and the keynote of all the Chronicle Plays for which Shakspeare was responsible. In the production of patriotic dramas Shakspeare, as was indicated in the introductory

chapter, did not stand alone ; but among many skilled craftsmen he stands out supreme. To him, as to other Elizabethans, England was something more than a home and a country : it was an inspiration. At no period in our history has the realization of national unity been keener, the consciousness of national identity more intense. Of this spirit there were numerous manifestations ; scientific curiosity ; maritime enterprise ; literary exuberance. But in no direction did the spirit find more characteristic utterance than in the historical drama. Of that form of literary art, of that medium of patriotic expression the Chronicle Plays of Shakspeare are the crowning glory. " God forbid," to adapt Coleridge's words, " that those plays should ever fall dead on the hearts of Englishmen. Then indeed might we say *Praeteriit gloria mundi.* For the spirit of patriotic reminiscences is the all permeating soul of these noble works. . . . Shakspeare avails himself of every opportunity to effect the great object of the historic drama—to familiarize the people with the great names of their country, thereby exciting a steady patriotism, a love of just liberty and a respect for all those institutions of social life which bind men together."

National unity and social solidarity—these are the two ideas which throughout dominate the plays on English history. And the one idea is the complement and condition of the other. Only by maintaining unity at home can grave dangers from without be successfully averted. To the safety of the State and to the well-being of the Commonwealth the union of all parties and all classes is, above all else, essential.

This was the supreme lesson which the Chronicle Plays were designed to teach. At no time in our history has the implied warning been superfluous; never can the lesson become obsolete.

APPENDIX I

SOME USEFUL BOOKS

I. ANNOTATED TEXTS:

The English Historical Plays may be studied in innumerable editions: Wordsworth's *Shakspeare's Historical Plays* (3 vols., Blackwood) contains all the plays, with much valuable material for critical appreciation; but the text is mutilated. The *Leopold Shakspeare* (Cassell) contains an excellent introduction by F. J. Furnivall. Among many editions of the separate plays are the Clarendon Press Edition (Oxford); Cassell's *National Library* (ed. Henry Morley); the *Arden Shakspeare* (Methuen); the *Temple Shakspeare* (Dent); and *The New Hudson* (Ginn).

II. LIVES OF SHAKSPEARE:

By Sir Sidney Lee (Smith, Elder); Sir Walter Raleigh (Macmillan's E.M.L.); F. J. Furnivall and John Munro (Cassell); Halliwell-Phillipps (Longmans); F. Harris, *The Man Shakspeare* (Palmer).

III. HISTORY OF THE PERIOD, 1199-1547.

(*a*) Materials utilized by Shakspeare:—Hall, *Chronicles*; Holinshed, *Chronicle*; Sir T. More, *Lives of Edward V and Richard III*; W. G. B. Stone's *Shakspeare's Holinshed* (Lawrence and Bullen), and Collier's *Shakspeare's Library* (ed. Hazlitt), (Reeves and Turner) are of the highest value.

(*b*) Modern:—Oman, *History of England* (Vols. III and IV) (Methuen); Sir James Ramsay,

Angevin Empire (Clarendon Press); Kate Norgate, *John Lackland* (Macmillan); Stubbs, *Constitutional History of England* (Clarendon Press); Oman, *Political History of England*, 1377-1485 (Longmans); Sir James Ramsay, *Lancaster and York* (Clarendon Press); T. D. Hardy, *Itinerary of King John* in *Rot. Lit. Patentium* (Record Commission); Church, *Henry V* (Macmillan, E.M.A.); *Paston Letters* (ed. Gairdner) (Constable); Oman, *Warwick, the King Maker* (Macmillan, E. M. A.); Fortescue, *Governance of England* (ed. Plummer) (Clarendon Press); Gairdner, *Richard III* (Camb. Press); Froude, *History of England* (Longmans); Pollard, *Henry VIII* (Longmans); Froude, *Divorce of Catherine of Aragon* (Longmans); Brewer, *Henry VIII* (Murray); Creighton, *Wolsey* (Macmillan); Friedmann, *Anne Boleyn* (Macmillan); M. Hume, *Wives of Henry VIII* (Nash); H. Hall, *Society in the Elizabethan Age* (Swan Sonnenschein).

IV. Criticism and Reference:

Bradley, *Shakspearian Tragedy* (Macmillan); Dowden, *Shakspeare Primer* (Macmillan); Dowden, *Shakspeare, his Mind and Art* (King); Boas, *Shakspeare and his Predecessors* (Murray); Fleay, *Shakspeare Manual* (Macmillan); Coleridge, *Lectures on Shakspeare* (Bell); Hazlitt, *Shakspeare's Characters* (Bell); Schlegel, *Dramatic Literature* (Bell); Watkiss Lloyd, *Essays on Shakspeare*; Gervinus, *Commentaries* (Smith, Elder); Mrs. Jameson, *Shakspeare's Female Characters* (Saunders, Otley); Courtenay, *Commentaries on the Historical Plays* (Colburn); H. N. Hudson, *Life, Art, and*

Characters of Shakspeare, 2 Vols. (Boston, 1875); Mézière, *Shakspeare—Ses Œuvres et ses Critiques* (Paris); C. Knight, *Studies of Shakspeare*; Raleigh, *Johnson on Shakspeare* (Clarendon Press); Walter Pater, *Appreciations* (Macmillan); Schelling, *English Chronicle Play*; A. C. Swinburne, *A Study of Shakspeare* (Chatto and Windus); A. C. Swinburne, *The Age of Shakspeare* (Chatto and Windus); Luce, *Handbook to Shakspeare's Works* (Bell); Kreyssig, *Vorlesungen uber Shakspere* (Berlin); Moulton, *Shakspeare as a Dramatic Artist* (Clarendon Press); Churton Collins, *Studies in Shakspeare* (Constable); Nichol Smith, *Eighteenth Century Essays on Shakspeare* (Maclehose, Glasgow); Courthorpe, *History of English Poetry* (Vols II and III) (Macmillan); Brandes, *Shakspeare* (Eng. Trs. Heinemann); *Shakspeare's England* (ed. Raleigh) (Clarendon Press); Onions, *The Oxford Shakspeare Glossary* (Clarendon Press); *Eighteenth Century Essays on Shakspeare.*

APPENDIX II

Historical periods covered by the Plays.

1. *King John*, 1199-1216.
2. *Richard II*, Sept. 1398-Feb. 1400.
3. *Henry IV* (Part I), Sept. 1402-Feb. 1403.
4. *Henry IV* (Part II), Feb. 1403-March, 1413.
5. *Henry V*, 1414-1420.
6. *Henry VI* (Part I), 1422-1455.
7. *Henry VI* (Part II), 1445-1455.
8. *Henry VI* (Part III), 1455-1471.
9. *Richard III*, 1471-1485.
10. *Henry VIII*, 1520-1533.

Order and probable Chronology of Composition.

PRE-SHAKSPEARIAN GROUP.

Henry VI (Part I), 1590-91.
(Touched by Shakspeare.)

FIRST PERIOD.

Henry VI (Part II), 1592.
Henry VI (Part III), 1592.
Richard III, 1593 (?).
Richard II, 1594 (?).

SECOND PERIOD.

King John, 1595.
Henry IV (Part I), 1596-7.
Henry IV (Part II), 1598.
Henry V, 1599.

THIRD PERIOD.

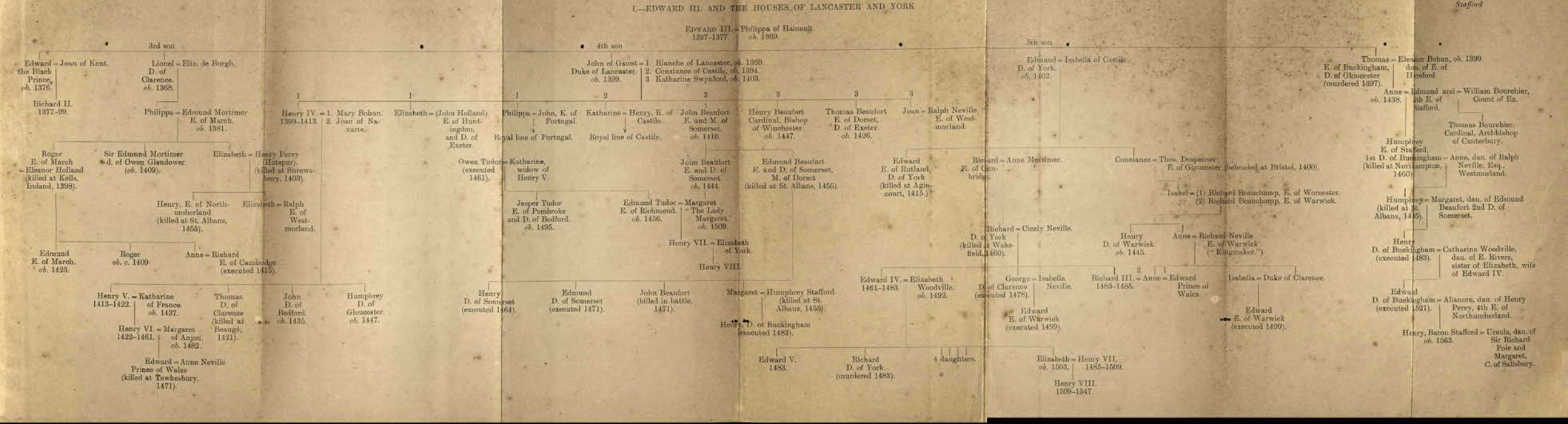
Henry VIII, 1610-12.
(? Shakspeare sole author.)

N.B.—The dates are in several cases only approximate.

APPENDIX III

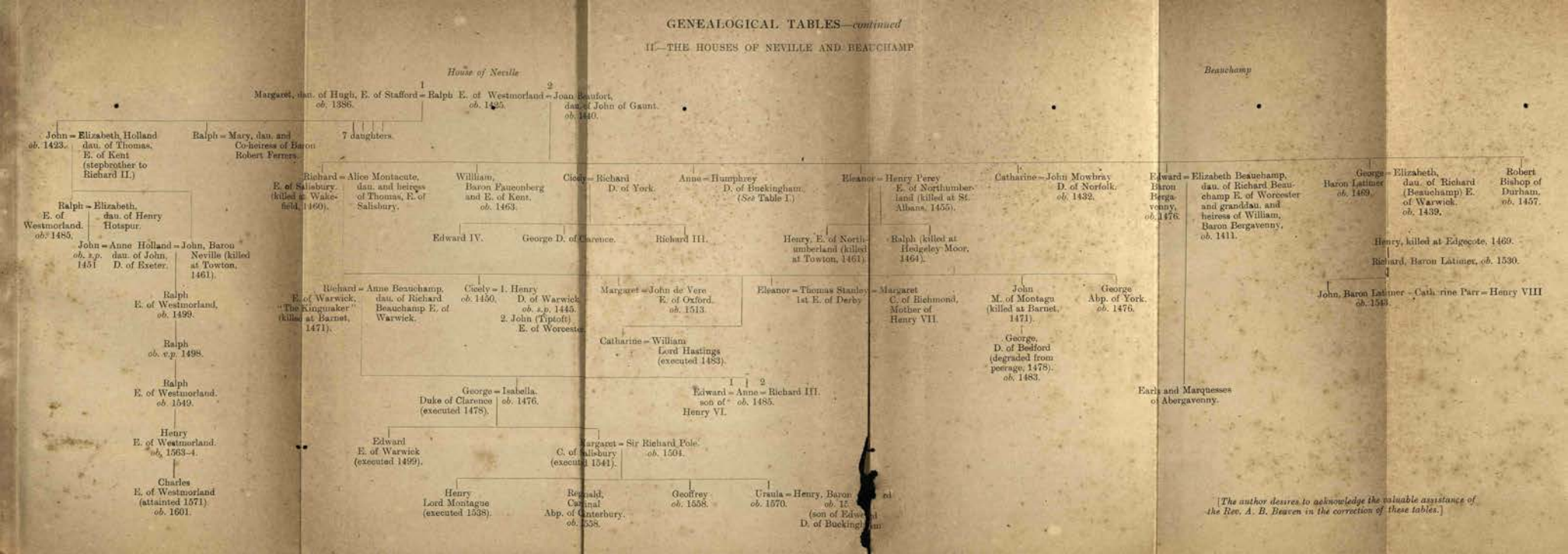
GENEALOGICAL TABLES

I.—EDWARD III. AND THE HOUSES OF LANCASTER AND YORK


Edward III. = Philippa of Hainault
1327–1377. ob. 1369.
3rd son
4th son
5th son
Stafford
Edward = Joan of Kent. the Black Prince, ob. 1376.
Richard II. 1377–99.
Lionel = Eliz. de Burgh. D. of Clarence. ob. 1368.
Philippa = Edmund Mortimer E. of March. ob. 1381.
John of Gaunt = 1. Blanche of Lancaster, ob. 1369. 2. Constance of Castile, ob. 1394. 3 Katharine Swynford, ob. 1403.
Duke of Lancaster. ob. 1399.
Edmund = Isabella of Castile. D. of York, ob. 1402.
Thomas = Eleanor Bohun, ob. 1399. E. of Buckingham, D. of Gloucester (murdered 1397). dau. of E. of Hereford.
Anne = Edmund and = William Bourchier, ob. 1438. 4th E. of Stafford. Count of Eu.
Thomas Bourchier, Cardinal, Archbishop of Canterbury.
Humphrey E. of Stafford, 1st D. of Buckingham (killed at Northampton, 1460) = Anne, dau. of Ralph Neville, Esq., Westmorland.
Humphrey (killed at St. Albans, 1455). = Margaret, dau. of Edmund Beaufort 2nd D. of Somerset.
Henry D. of Buckingham (executed 1483). = Catharine Woodville, dau. of E. Rivers, sister of Elizabeth, wife of Edward IV.
Edward D. of Buckingham (executed 1521). = Alianore, dau. of Henry Percy, 4th E. of Northumberland.
Henry, Baron Stafford ob. 1563. = Ursula, dau. of Sir Richard Pole and Margaret, C. of Salisbury.
1 1 1 2 3 3 3 3
Henry IV. 1399–1413. = 1. Mary Bohun. 2. Joan of Navarre.
Elizabeth = (John Holland) E. of Huntingdon, and D. of Exeter.
Philippa = John, K. of Portugal.
Katharine = Henry, K. of Castile.
John Beaufort E. and M. of Somerset. ob. 1410.
Henry Beaufort Cardinal, Bishop of Winchester. ob. 1447.
Thomas Beaufort E. of Dorset, D. of Exeter. ob. 1426.
Joan = Ralph Neville E. of Westmorland.
Royal line of Portugal.
Royal line of Castile.
Roger E. of March = Eleanor Holland (killed at Kells, Ireland, 1398).
Sir Edmund Mortimer s.p. of Owen Glendower (ob. 1409).
Elizabeth = Henry Percy (Hotspur), (killed at Shrewsbury, 1403).
Owen Tudor (executed 1461). = Katharine, widow of Henry V.
John Beaufort E. and D. of Somerset. ob. 1444.
Edmund Beaufort E. and D. of Somerset, M. of Dorset (killed at St. Albans, 1455).
Edward E. of Rutland, D. of York (killed at Agincourt, 1415.)
Richard = Anne Mortimer. E. of Cambridge.
Constance = Thos. Despenser, E. of Gloucester (beheaded at Bristol, 1400).
Isabel = (1) Richard Beauchamp, E. of Worcester. (2) Richard Beauchamp, E. of Warwick.
Henry, E. of Northumberland (killed at St. Albans, 1455).
Elizabeth = Ralph E. of Westmorland.
Jasper Tudor E. of Pembroke and D. of Bedford. ob. 1495.
Edmund Tudor = Margaret E. of Richmond. ob. 1456. "The Lady Margaret." ob. 1509.
Henry VII. = Elizabeth of York.
Henry VIII.
Richard = Cicely Neville. D. of York (killed at Wakefield, 1460).
Henry D. of Warwick. ob. 1445.
Anne = Richard Neville E. of Warwick ("Kingmaker.")
Edward IV. = Elizabeth Woodville. 1461–1483. ob. 1492.
George = Isabella Neville. D. of Clarence (executed 1478).
Richard III. = Anne = Edward Prince of Wales. 1483–1485.
Isabella = Duke of Clarence.
Edward E. of Warwick (executed 1499).
Edward E. of Warwick (executed 1499).
Edmund E. of March. ob. 1425.
Roger ob. c. 1409
Anne = Richard E. of Cambridge (executed 1415).
Henry V. = Katharine 1413–1422. of France. ob. 1437.
Thomas D. of Clarence (killed at Beaugé, 1421).
John D. of Bedford. ob. 1435.
Humphrey D. of Gloucester. ob. 1447.
Henry D. of Somerset (executed 1464).
Edmund D. of Somerset (executed 1471).
John Beaufort (killed in battle, 1471).
Margaret = Humphrey Stafford (killed at St. Albans, 1455).
Henry D. of Buckingham (executed 1483).
Henry VI. = Margaret 1422–1461. of Anjou. ob. 1482.
Edward = Anne Neville Prince of Wales (killed at Tewkesbury, 1471).
Edward V. 1483.
Richard D. of York. (murdered 1483).
4 daughters.
Elizabeth = Henry VII. ob. 1503. 1485–1509.
Henry VIII. 1509–1547.

GENEALOGICAL TABLES—*continued*

II.—THE HOUSES OF NEVILLE AND BEAUCHAMP


House of Neville
Beauchamp
1
Margaret, dau. of Hugh, E. of Stafford = Ralph E. of Westmorland ob. 1425.
2
= Joan Beaufort, dau. of John of Gaunt. ob. 1440.
John = Elizabeth Holland dau. of Thomas, E. of Kent (stepbrother to Richard II.) ob. 1423.
Ralph = Mary, dau. and Co-heiress of Baron Robert Ferrers.
7 daughters.
Ralph E. of Westmorland. ob. 1485.
= Elizabeth, dau. of Henry Hotspur.
John ob. s.p. 1451
= Anne Holland dau. of John, D. of Exeter.
John, Baron Neville (killed at Towton, 1461).
Ralph E. of Westmorland, ob. 1499.
Ralph ob. v.p. 1498.
Ralph E. of Westmorland. ob. 1549.
Henry E. of Westmorland. ob. 1563–4.
Charles E. of Westmorland (attainted 1571) ob. 1601.
Richard E. of Salisbury. (killed at Wakefield, 1460).
= Alice Montacute, dau. and heiress of Thomas, E. of Salisbury.
William, Baron Faucomberg and E. of Kent. ob. 1463.
Cicely = Richard D. of York.
Anne = Humphrey D. of Buckingham. (See Table I.)
Eleanor = Henry Percy E. of Northumberland (killed at St. Albans, 1455).
Catharine = John Mowbray D. of Norfolk. ob. 1432.
Edward Baron Bergavenny, ob. 1476.
= Elizabeth Beauchamp, dau. of Richard Beauchamp E. of Worcester and granddau. and heiress of William, Baron Bergavenny, ob. 1411.
George Baron Latimer ob. 1469.
= Elizabeth, dau. of Richard (Beauchamp) E. of Warwick. ob. 1439.
Robert Bishop of Durham. ob. 1457.
Henry, killed at Edgecote, 1469.
Richard, Baron Latimer, ob. 1530.
John, Baron Latimer
= Catharine Parr = Henry VIII
ob. 1543.
Edward IV.
George D. of Clarence.
Richard III.
Henry, E. of Northumberland (killed at Towton, 1461).
Ralph (killed at Hedgeley Moor, 1464).
Richard = Anne Beauchamp, E. of Warwick, "The Kingmaker" (killed at Barnet, 1471).
dau. of Richard Beauchamp E. of Warwick.
Cicely ob. 1450.
= 1. Henry D. of Warwick. ob. s.p. 1445.
2. John (Tiptoft) E. of Worcester.
Margaret = John de Vere E. of Oxford. ob. 1513.
Catharine = William Lord Hastings (executed 1483).
Eleanor = Thomas Stanley 1st E. of Derby
= Margaret C. of Richmond, Mother of Henry VII.
John M. of Montagu (killed at Barnet, 1471).
George, D. of Bedford (degraded from peerage, 1478). ob. 1483.
George Abp. of York. ob. 1476.
George = Isabella. Duke of Clarence (executed 1478). ob. 1476.
1
Edward son of Henry VI.
2
= Anne ob. 1485.
= Richard III.
Earls and Marquesses of Abergavenny.
Edward E. of Warwick (executed 1499).
Margaret = Sir Richard Pole. C. of Salisbury (executed 1541). ob. 1504.
Henry Lord Montague (executed 1538).
Reginald, Cardinal Abp. of Canterbury. ob. 1558.
Geoffrey ob. 1558.
Ursula = Henry, Baron ob. 15
(son of Edward D. of Buckingham

[The author desires to acknowledge the valuable assistance of the Rev. A. B. Beaven in the correction of these tables.]

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